THE INDEPENDENT

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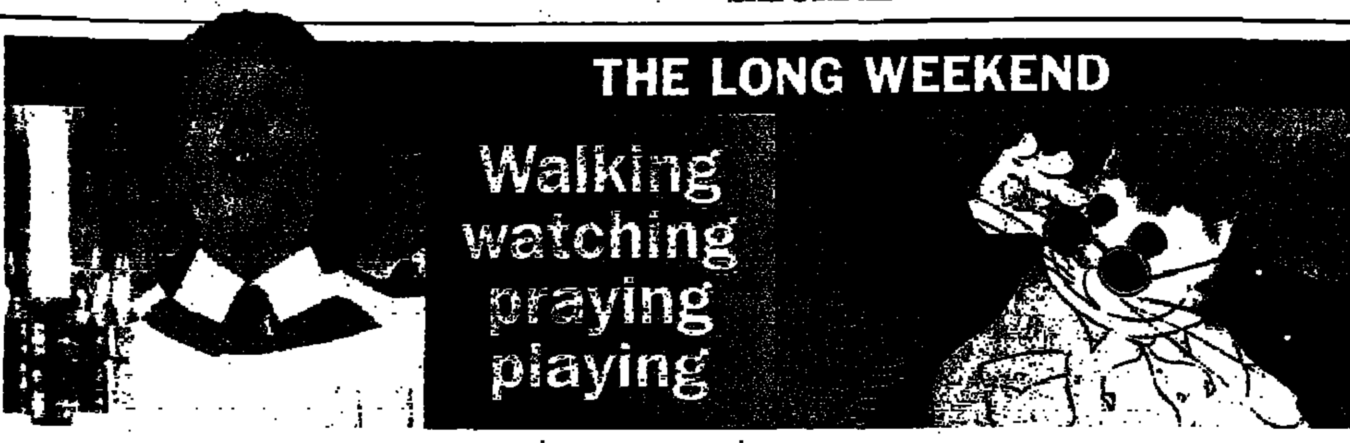
THE EYE
14 days of TV

THE LONG WEEKEND



THE MAGAZINE

Yuletide fun: Curses, knives and relatives from hell

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

Forget the propaganda – just how much fun is the British Christmas, really? Not a lot, according to a fly-on-the-wall documentary scheduled to be shown on Christmas Eve, and bound to win a Scrooge-of-the-year award. It paints a picture of cat-fighting relatives, spoilt children and shopping from hell.

Channel 4's *The Real Christmas Show* shadowed celebrations of six families last year. The first account found Mags Ridley and Pat Murray, two middle-aged divorcées spending Christmas Eve crossly working the phones for a mini-cab firm in Newcastle amid a howling blizzard. Then they head for essential Christmas provisions. But the supermarket is stripped bare. We join Mags's children at home, where the pressure of the next day's shift means they have to open their presents at 1am. Then a frayed Mags discovers she has forgotten the Christmas pudding...

Meanwhile Debbie Duval is lucky to be having Christmas at all. A kidney and pancreas transplant left her bedridden the previous year and doctors had given her only a 50:50 chance of survival. She spends Christmas with her husband Jonathon and his brother Eddie in Cornwall. All cosy together? No: tradition demands that the men clear off to the pub while the women cook on Christmas Day.

The cameras follow Jonathon as he sneaks off to the garage to make Debbie's Christmas present. She is mystified but optimistic. "There is only one thing I can think he might be making. He knows what I want, and have wanted for years, is a jewellery box," she confides.

Christmas Day comes and presents are opened and ... Jonathon has not made Debbie a jewellery box. It is a plant stand. She glances at the camera but puts on a brave face. "I love it. You're very clever," she tells him.

In the Fowler home in the West Midlands, two little sisters are getting ready for Christmas amid constant bickering. Lauren and Jessica spend a lot of time telling one another how much they get on each other's nerves. Both girls race to open their presents on Christmas day, but later Lauren laments that some of her presents were a bit "naff" and Jessica sulks because she didn't get enough.

It is a far cry from the Todd's Christmas in Liverpool. Elaine Todd has been saving £1 a week at the butcher's all year for a turkey and has managed about £40 — "I was a bit skint some weeks". She gets the tree on Christmas Eve because "they're all reduced by then". Presents are opened seconds past midnight on Christmas Eve, and on Christmas Day her children Billy and Joanne sleep in all morning.

Elaine's sister Bernie comes over for lunch – "We used to fight like cat and dog" – and Billy finally surfaces about noon. When Joanne gets bored with waiting for food and starts chanting: "Why are we waiting?" Elaine loses her temper. "Cos I haven't got a sharp knife clean to cut your throat," she tells her.

Probably the prize for the worst real-life Christmas goes to John Rush, a plain-speaking, hard-drinking Suffolk farmer, who gives a good impression of hating Christmas, his stepchildren, and fun generally. Relations are strained: Damien, his stepson, admits he would not be going home if he was not so poor, and he has not got any presents.

We begin to understand why when John bans Damien's sister, Abigail, and her boyfriend from the Christmas lunch because she is not dressed smartly enough, and Damien's mother, Sheila, tells the camera that she does not bother to wrap her presents — "it only gets shredded anyway".

As things go from bad to worse Damien promises that he will not be back this year. His plan: "I'm going to have a major beer and pizza event on my own." Happy Christmas anyway, Damien.

Patten lashes 'sick' plan for Hong Kong

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Britain has lashed out at Peking over its plans to appoint a new puppet assembly for Hong Kong. In an outspoken interview with *The Independent*, the Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, has said that the appointment of the legislature is "stomach-turning".

On the eve of a special event organised by China to select members of an assembly to rival Hong Kong's Legislative Council, Britain has challenged the Chinese to seek international arbitration to determine the legality of its group.

Using some of the strongest language employed by the Government since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, yesterday accused his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, of breaking a personal pledge, given last April, not to establish a rival legislature before the handover of power next July. He described China's actions as a "serious set-back for the development of representative government in Hong Kong".

While Britain was challenging China to determine the legality of its legislature at a body such as the International Court of Justice, Martin Lee, leader of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, called on the Chinese government to hold meetings of its council in the colony and face a High Court challenge to its legality.

Today 400 members of a selection committee will gather in the border town of Shenzhen to choose the members who will serve on the rival legislature.

Mr Pattem told *The Independent*: "The actual procedures that we're going to be obliged to witness tomorrow are so stomach-turning. Here we will have members of this appointed echo chamber, nominating one another, choosing one another, voting for one another. The average tennis club runs its affairs in a more dignified way."

"We also have a position where the people who were defeated in the [1995] Legislative Council elections are seeking to get into this body by the back door," he added, pointing out that leading pro-Peking politicians had vowed not to gain office in this way, yet were putting their names forward for selection.

"There's one simple fact," said the Governor. "Chinese officials don't want to have as many democrats in the Legislative Council as the people of Hong Kong regularly elect."

Mr Rifkind called in the Chinese ambassador, Jiang Enzu, on Thursday night both to issue the arbitration challenge and tell him that Britain expected the Provisional Legislature to be rapidly replaced by "a substantive legislature constituted by genuine elections in the sense in which any reasonable person would understand that term".

In a move to put further pressure on China, Britain also vowed to report every six months to parliament on Hong Kong developments until 2000, when the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group, responsible for Hong Kong transitional issues, is wound up. The report will carry a special emphasis "on the protection of human rights in Hong Kong" and its findings will be forwarded to United Nations human rights monitors.

Britain has also declared that it will step up lobbying both with the United States and other European Union members to put pressure on China to observe the provisions of the 1984 treaty under which agreement was made for the British colony's sovereignty to return to China.

All these moves will infuriate China. In a first response, China's spokesman from the New China News Agency (NCNA) in Hong Kong said that Mr Rifkind's challenge to the legality of the Provisional Legislature was "groundless" and that its establishment was "necessary, reasonable and justified".

Before the statement was issued Mr Patten said "I certainly am not going to suggest that Xinhua [the NCNA] is going to start saying things which are sensible" about its treaty obligations.

"What on earth do Chinese officials think an international treaty means?" he asked. "An international treaty governing Hong Kong's civil liberties does not mean that come the first of July Britain can walk away from Hong Kong and wash its hands of responsibility ... there is a continuing moral commitment by Britain."

Unstitching democracy, page 8

Spellbound: Earth Magician Kevin Carlyon and his high priestess Sandy Jeffrey on the cliffs at Dover yesterday Photograph: David Rose

Witch report promises safe travel

Steve Boggan

It was reassuring to discover that the High Priest of British witches drives a Volvo, but slightly less comforting to see his broomstick on the back seat.

"Nah," said Kevin Carlyon. "It doesn't fly – well, not unless you've had a few ciders too many."

Mr Carlyon, 37, High Priest of the 576 witches of the Covenant of Earth Magic, was in Dover planning his latest piece of white magic in a career spanning a couple of decades. This time, it wasn't the exorcism of a stately home or the casting of a spell on a bad road or rail scheme.

It was a ceremony to ensure the safety of Channel Tunnel travellers today, the winter solstice, when history has shown that accidents have a sad tendency to happen. He and his partner, Sandy Jeffery, 44, his High Priestess, decided two weeks ago that they would cast a good spell on the Tunnel after experiencing bad omens about 21 December, the anniversary of, among other tragedies, the Lockerbie air disaster.

"The winter solstice has a four-year cycle in which the forces of earth, air, fire and water are invoked. This year it is fire and we had a horrible feeling about a fire in the tunnel. But now we have performed our ceremony, everything will be alright," he said.

Thirteen witches, dressed in robes, climbed up Shakespeare Cliff outside Dover at midnight and stood in a circle around an altar chanting: "We summon forth the forces of nature to save and protect those who wish to travel to foreign lands."

QUICKLY

Hostages sent food
The United Nations provided 500 meals for the 375 hostages held in the Japanese embassy in Lima as the seige by Left-wing guerrillas continued. Hostages had earlier held messages to windows saying they had no food or water. Page 9

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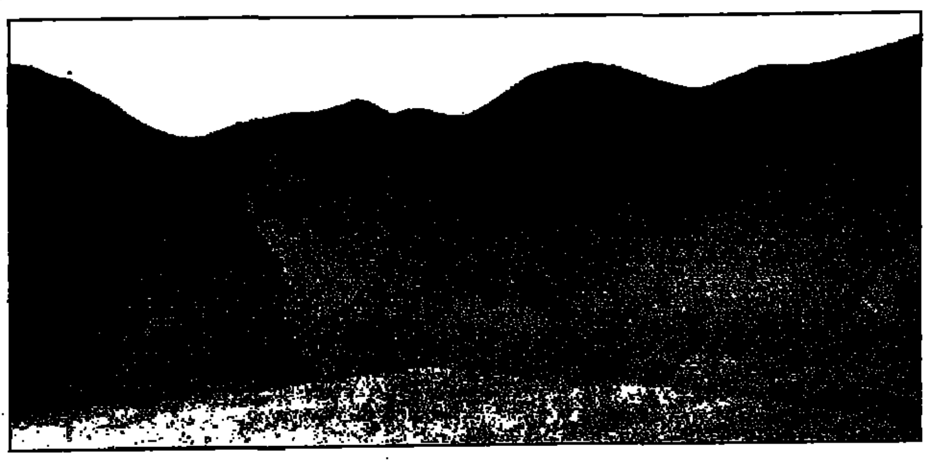
The hidden mountains whose poison all Britain has fled from

But what are they made of? Discover the answer on **page 5**



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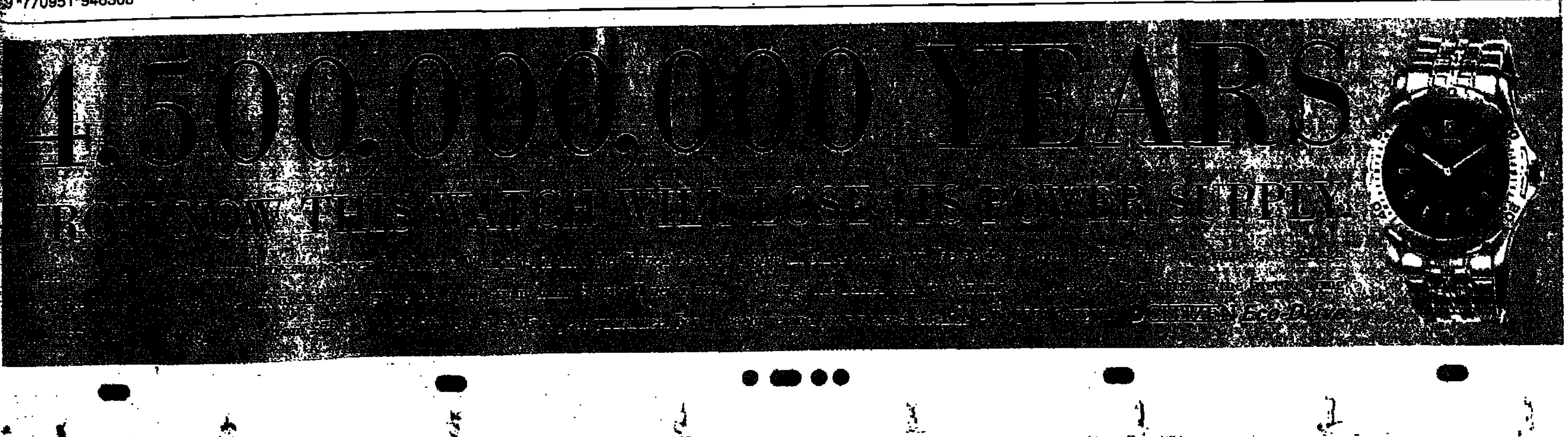


news

Court told fiancé stabbed in row over hat

Michael Streeter

Tracie Andrews killed her fiancé Lee Harvey after a row over a black woolly hat in the so-called Worcestershire road-rage murder, a court heard yesterday.

Ms Andrews, 27, stabbed Harvey up to 37 times after a history of domestic violence between the couple, Redditch magistrates were told.

Kerry Moreton, prosecuting, said the pair had rowed after she gave him the hat – of a type "associated with black people" – for a joke as they drove home. It was later found in a nearby ditch.

"There is evidence that she produced the hat in the car and there was then an argument," said Ms Moreton. She said there was no evidence that two men in a Sierra, one of whom Ms Andrews claimed killed 25-year-old Harvey after a car chase, had existed.

A witness who had seen the couple's Ford Escort late on 1 December, the night of the murder, saw no sign of another vehicle. "It all points to only two people being there, Mr Harvey and Ms Andrews," she said.

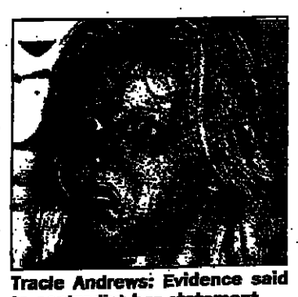
Ms Andrews, from Alvechurch, Hereford and Worcester, appeared before magistrates having been charged with the murder late on Thursday.

Tim Robinson, her solicitor, successfully applied for reporting restrictions on the case to be lifted, claiming that police evidence against her was "weak and tenuous". And he appealed for new witnesses to come forward to corroborate her story.

Ms Andrews' family had always believed it was not a road-rage killing but a racial attack by the passenger in the Sierra, against a man whose dark skin meant he was "frequently mistaken as coming from the Indian sub-continent and particularly Pakistan," said Mr Robinson.

During the attack a man – described as overweight and with staring eyes – had called Harvey "a fucking Pakistani", he added.

Mr Robinson agreed that the couple, who had been together for two years, had an "eventful relationship" but said that they always made up and Ms Andrews regarded Harvey as a loving man whom she deeply loved. "He was the last person in the world she would have deliberately killed."



Tracie Andrews: Evidence said to contradict her statement

The fact that no knife had been found at the scene at Cooper's Hill, Alvechurch, or on her person, proved she had not been the killer, said Mr Robinson, who accused the police of "sub-standard investigation".

Having originally regarded Ms Andrews as a victim of "this wicked crime", they had then made a volte-face when they failed to find the occupants of the Sierra," he said.

The court also heard that Ms Andrews, who has a daughter, tried to kill herself before she became a suspect because of her grief, and had undergone psychiatric counselling.

But Ms Moreton said that Ms Andrews had had 15 minutes before help arrived to dispose of the knife in a rural area and pointed to evidence that contradicted her account. Despite widespread appeals no one had reported seeing the Sierra that night, Ms Andrews had failed to take its number plate and the defendant had claimed the Sierra had chosen to stop near a house for the attack.

A girl in that house had recalled hearing only two voices – one softly spoken – rather than four during a row, Ms Moreton said. There had also been a quantity of blood found behind the couple's car, not in front of it, where the alleged attack took place.

Ms Moreton also outlined a history of domestic violence including how on two occasions Ms Andrews had been seen to attack Harvey: once with a bottle and once punching him in the face. There were also suggestions she had brandished a knife at a previous boyfriend and possibly on another occasion at Mr Harvey.

Witnesses had also referred to "animosity" between the pair on the day of the murder and a clump of her hair had been found near Mr Harvey's hand at the murder scene," she said.

Ms Andrews, who appeared at a police press conference two days after the murder to appeal for witnesses to come forward, was granted bail on condition that she lived with her mother. But the prosecution immediately lodged an appeal and Ms Andrews was detained in custody pending the appeal at a Crown Court which is expected to be heard within the next 48 hours.

Polls on Philip rigged by guns lobby

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

Members of the gun lobby yesterday admitted to an organised campaign to rig Thursday's phone-in polls on Prince Philip and his comments on guns.

The polls were carried out separately by BBC's Radio 5 Live and Sky News to test public support for the Duke of Edinburgh's controversial comments on 5 Live that if Thomas Hamilton had killed the Dunblane children with a cricket bat, the game of cricket would not face a ban.

His views ignited a storm of outrage from MPs and anti-gun campaigners. But the overwhelming majority of listeners – 68 per cent who phoned Radio 5 Live and 72 per cent to Sky News – apparently sided with the Prince.

Yesterday, however, *The Independent* obtained evidence of a deliberate campaign to sway the polls to support the views of the pro-gun lobby.

It was made by CyberShooters, a group of 160 gun supporters who are members of an electronic mailing list and who use the Internet to exchange views.

One message from the group advised: "Sky News are conducting a poll today on Prince Philip's comments. Tel: 0891 665531. Remember to dial 141 before you dial the number so that you can make multiple votes."

Another message urged: "Please register your support for Prince Philip. Phone the Palace ... phone the BBC ... e-mail the BBC." It also gave the appropriate numbers to call.

A third message suggested the text of a letter of support to the Duke and gave details of how to address him. "Please bury him with letters of support. This is a 'poll' we shall win," it concluded.

A fourth message read: "STOP PRESS. Shooters win Radio 5 phone poll by more than 2:1. 68 per cent agree with HRH. 32 per cent disagree. Well done folks!"

Yesterday it emerged that a chartered engineer, Peter Jackson, who runs a Scotland-based company called Forge Consulting, was behind the campaign as the administrator of CyberShooters.

He was unrepentant, however. "I understand that criticism may be levelled against us for exhorting people to vote twice but the radio programmes don't say we can't. This is not a general election. This is a phone poll. The fact that the anti-gun lobby haven't done the same is possibly an expression of how bored they are all getting with it."

Blowing his trumpet: The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, recording an hour-long programme for Jazz FM yesterday, to be broadcast on Boxing Day. Mr Clarke will be playing his favourite tracks and explaining how he came to like jazz Photograph: Keith Dobney

Leak reveals secret plan to provoke walk-out by ground staff

Ministry helps BA to defeat strikers

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

The Ministry of Defence has been co-operating with a secret plan to dismiss up to 3,000 British Airways ground staff if they go on strike.

A confidential BA document leaked to *The Independent* reveals that hundreds of senior Heathrow employees have been training for strike-breaking duties at RAF Wroughton, Wiltshire.

The memorandum reveals that under the "snow plan", managers would be needed to keep a basic service running for four to six weeks until outside contractors were brought in on a permanent basis. The recruitment of an alternative workforce was now a "priority", according to the paper.

Around 1,600 managers, around half of the total number at Heathrow, would be drafted in to fulfil all the duties of the ground staff responsible for stowing baggage and freight and towing aircraft into position.

The plans form the biggest such covert operation since Rupert Murdoch recruited a shadow workforce for his Wapping print works but much of the labour movement's fury will be directed at the Ministry of Defence for allowing its property to be used for such a plan. RAF Wroughton is a hospital base which is being sold, but is still owned by the MoD.

In the internal BA memo, management discloses its concern that a plan to cut £1bn from costs by 2000 has encountered most opposition from ground staff, who are seen as the "highest area of risk" for industrial action.

According to union sources, managers are talking about "day zero", scheduled for 15 January, when the company will impose new employment conditions hoping to provoke a walk-out. Management has demanded agreement over the changes by 10 January.

As part of the contingency plans some managers will have to be trained on wide-bodied jets such as the 747 and 767. Senior employees have already gained experience of the 767, but directors are insisting that training on the 747 take place away from Heathrow so that suspicion is not aroused. The memo reveals that a TriStar had been found at Bournemouth which was being evaluated for its suitability.

Union officials argue that there are inevitably safety implications when only partially trained managers are towing large aircraft with thousands of gallons of fuel on board.

The "snow plan" was originally envisaged as a means of providing up to 75 per cent of services during severe weather. Under the strike-breaking strategy, it is envisaged that the limited timetable could be provided by managers.

George Ryde, a national officer at the Transport and General Workers' Union, called the tactics dishonest and unethical and said they smacked of corporate paranoia.

"We see ourselves as saving BA from itself. We are not going to be goaded into industrial action," he said. "With talk of a 'day zero' they seem to be adopting a Pol Pot approach. It's impossible to ask our staff to co-operate with company plans to reduce their terms and conditions if they've got a hidden agenda to dispose of workers."

BA said it was attempting to reduce costs.

Coalition urges boycott of Sony over crash film

Andrew Brown
Religious Affairs Correspondent

An ad-hoc coalition of Muslim and Christian fundamentalists is threatening to boycott Sony products in protest against the film *Crash*.

Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens, has joined forces with Cornerstone Ministries, a fundamentalist church group based in Surrey, to try and prevent the film being distributed in this country.

In a letter to a co-president of the Japanese conglomerate, the coalition said: "This alliance is prepared to zealously recommend that each particular group advises its assembly, congregation, or community to stop purchasing Sony products until this film is either banned or discarded." The proposed boycott would not start until 8 January.

The film, directed by David Cronenberg and based on the novel by JG Ballard, describes the life of a group of perverts who gain pleasure from car crashes, and includes a sex sequence involving a woman wearing calipers. The film has already been banned by Westminster City Council, which prevents it being shown in the West End of London. It has not yet been issued with a certificate by the British Board of Film Classification. It was violently attacked as exceeding all possible limits of taste, and defended by 50 leading film makers as a work of art which should be released uncut.

Six Muslim organisations have signed up to the appeal, among them the Bradford Council of Mosques and the self-selected Muslim parliament. Eight Christian groups have also signed. Three are the English branches of American television evangelists, among them Benny Hinn Media Missionaries and Team Thrust UK.

Campaigns against Hollywood values are gaining currency in the USA, where Christian groups have protested against the Disney corporation for distributing the film *Priest* – which concerned the struggles of a gay priest in Liverpool – as well as giving benefits to gay employees.

But this is the first time such a campaign has attracted support from both Muslim and Christian fundamentalists. The coalition against the film claims to have 105,000 on its mailing lists.

significant shorts

Retrial for man in Leah ecstasy case

A teenager accused of being involved in buying the ecstasy tablet which killed Leah Betts is to face a retrial next year.

Steven Packman, 18, of Laindon, Essex, will stand trial in February at Norwich Crown Court. A jury failed to reach a verdict earlier this week after a seven-day trial. Mr Packman had denied the charge.

His former friend, Stephen Smith, 19, of Basildon, Essex, was given a two-year conditional discharge at the same court yesterday after admitting the same offence. The judge told him: "Go back and spread the message as to just how dangerous ecstasy is. If in doing that you stop some other person from taking this drug with tragic consequences you will have made up in some part for what you did."

Festive cheer for prisoners

More than 100 terrorists will be released from Northern Ireland's jails to spend Christmas with their families, the Government announced last night. A total of 62 republicans and 47 loyalists will be freed on Monday to spend between seven and ten days with their families. They are among a total of 405 prisoners in the province who will be given leave – more than a quarter of the overall prison population of 1,552.

Ruling leaves animals at sea

A High Court judge yesterday rejected claims by animal rights protesters that Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg was operating an unlawful policy which allowed ferries carrying farm animals to the Continent to sail in bad weather conditions likely to cause injury and suffering.

The accusations were made during a hearing in which the Protesters Animal Information Network (Pain) argued that ferries were allowed, for commercial reasons, to sail in rough weather when inspectors ought to stop them. Pain's director, the screenwriter Carla Lane, said afterwards: "I don't feel I want to be British today. We had a very good case."

Hillsborough damages: police to appeal

South Yorkshire Police are to appeal against the £200,000 damages award made earlier this month to John McCarthy, who suffers from post traumatic stress disorder following the crushing of his half-brother in the 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster.

Police said their insurers had instructed lawyers to lodge an appeal, which could take a year to come to court. The McCarthy family's solicitor said Mr McCarthy was "bitterly disappointed but not surprised".

Patricia Wynn Davies

Schools exodus to be stemmed

Burnt-out teachers' hopes of retiring early next Easter to beat a government clampdown are likely to be dashed by plans to impose cash penalties on authorities who permit an exodus of staff. Teaching unions predicted mass departures of staff over 50 after ministers announced proposals to change pension rules in an attempt to cut high levels of early retirement. But new guidance from the Department for Education and Employment on the proposed changes will make it prohibitively expensive for employers to let too many teachers go. *Lucy Ward*

Councillor jailed for fraud

A Labour councillor was jailed for six months yesterday for defrauding his own authority in a housing benefit fiddle. Chris Wright, 49, a former chairman of Thanet's housing benefit committee, had his wife pose as his sister to claim £9,376 benefits, Maidstone Crown Court was told. Brenda Wright was put on probation and ordered to do 100 hours community service.

Death of top astronomer

The US astronomer Carl Sagan has died, aged 62, of pneumonia, after a long illness caused by bone marrow disease. Obituary, page 13

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BACK ISSUES

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"Oh, flange!! What can I get for Deirdre?"

Music From The Motion Picture "Evita"

"I've heard so many good things about the film I can't wait to see it. Even Barry Norman was raving about her on the telly, called her magnificent, I think. I've heard her version of "Don't Cry For Me Argentina" and it sent shivers down my spine. Plus there's a new song which Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote especially for her, called "You Must Love Me" and, of course, "Another Suitcase In Another Hall". Why wait?"

Enya "The Memory Of Trees"

"Enya's records are always beautiful. You can put them on and drift off into another world. It's cheaper than a holiday. The consensus is that this one's her best ever. "Haunting, enchanting ... extraordinary," it said in the Daily Express, and Q said it was "Like nothing else on Earth". Plus it's got "Anywhere Is" and the gorgeous "On My Way Home" on it. Luscious."

Alanis Morissette "Jagged Little Pill"

"She's incredible. She was a winner at the Brit Awards and the Grammies and has hardly been out of the charts or off the radio all year. I know all the words to her songs: "You Oughta Know", "Ironic", "Head Over Feet", "All I Really Want" and "Hand In My Pocket". She really tells it like it is and good for her, I say. Definitely."

Rod Stewart "If We Fall In Love Tonight"

"Nobody sings love songs like Rod Stewart. What a voice, and he's had some great love songs in the charts, all of which are on this record. "Have I Told You Lately", "I Don't Want To Talk About It", "Downtown Train", "Tom Traubert's Blues (Waltzing Matilda)", "You're In My Heart". Plus there's some new versions of classics like "When I Need You" to bring it up to date. Lovely. Lovely."

R.E.M. "New Adventures In Hi-Fi"

"I got that "Automatic For The People" a couple of years back and everybody said it was their best, but this one's even better. Five stars in Q and a bunch of accolades that make it a bit of a winner in the Christmas gift stakes. It includes "Electrolite", "How The West Was Won (and Where It Got Us)", "Bittersweet Me" and the haunting "E-Bow (The Letter)". A classic."

هكذا من الأصل

Christmas tales: Lost, found and missing

Mother who attacked husband's mistress walks free in tears

Charlie Bain

Debbie Smith, jailed for nine months for assaulting her husband's mistress with a stiletto-heeled shoe, was reunited with her three children for Christmas after her sentence was yesterday quashed by the Court of Appeal.

The appeal court judge was critical of the original trial judge for sending Mrs Smith to prison. She was a "hard-working, good mother and has been a good wife," he said.

He added that she had never committed an offence and the trial judge should have paid regard to the fact that Mr Smith was the author of his own misfortunes.

"We think the learned judge took a far too restrictive view of this attack," said Lord Justice Bedlam.

Outside the High Court Mrs Smith, 29, a diminutive figure in a black suit, sobbed and clutched a photo of her son as she was hustled out of the back entrance by representatives from a tabloid newspaper.

In a statement issued by the paper last night Mrs Smith thanked the public and media who supported her in her fight for justice: "I am obviously delighted at the court's decision today," she said. "But I have been through a terrible ordeal and now just want to be reunited with my children."

She had cried throughout the hearing and collapsed in the dock and had to be carried from the courtroom after hearing the verdict. She had served just seven days of the nine-month sentence and returned to her home in Manchester last night to be reunited with her children.

She was sent to prison by Judge Peter Lakin at Manchester Crown Court last Friday when she admitted assaulting her best friend, Francine French, whom she caught having an affair with her estranged husband Jeffrey. The severity of the sentence on a woman with no previous convictions sparked a public outcry and several campaigns for her release.

Replacing her sentence with a year's probation yesterday, Lord Justice Bedlam said that the offence did not merit a custodial sentence and said that Judge Lakin, should have considered what jail would mean for the "caring mother" and her three children.

Describing the background to the case, Nick Clarke, representing Mrs Smith, said that her marriage had collapsed earlier this year and although the couple had a close relationship they were living at different addresses.

The pair were childhood sweethearts who had "enjoyed a very long and happy" marriage during which they had four children, Emma, 11, Jeffrey, nine, Jonathan, seven, and Andrew, who died from a brain haemorrhage when he was nine months old.

Mr Clarke said that "things had come to a head" in August, when Mr Smith made love to his estranged wife and returned to his brother's home, where he was staying. When Mrs Smith went round to the house the next morning she discovered he had stayed overnight with Mrs French, the wife of her former next-door neighbour, who had become her best friend during the split with her husband.

"She wanted to confront them with their betrayal and went to her brother-in-law's house and went into the bedroom, where Mrs French was drying her hair, and wearing her husband's T-shirt."

Her husband then emerged from the shower wearing boxer shorts. "Mrs French's reaction she took as a smile or smirk in a mocking manner and she struck out with a shoe she was carrying." The heel of the stiletto shoe caused two wounds, which each needed a stitch. Mrs Smith suffered more serious injuries in the ensuing fight, including a fractured wrist, strained neck and bruises on her body and face.

Calling for an "act of mercy" from The Court of Appeal, Mr Clarke said that the mother of three had been severely traumatised by the jail sentence and had to undergo heavy sedation in the hospital wing at Risley Prison, near Warrington, Cheshire, where she had been for the past week.

"She believes the sentence has destroyed her life and parted her from her children and the children are very upset by the removal of their mother ...

"Whilst the mother was away, the two younger children were removed from their school by their father against their wishes."

He said all three children were now back with their maternal grandparents.

Gotcha: Mrs Smith leaving court yesterday with representatives of a tabloid newspaper Photograph: Jeff Moore

Mystery of the Yuletide cards from nowhere

Catherine Wild, a widow, has been receiving Christmas cards from the same family for the past 17 years. This year the usual card dropped through her letter box from "Pat and Roger and family" with an extra card they want passed on to Auntie Muriel.

Mrs Wild, aged 67, has not the faintest idea who is sending the cards.

"You would have thought at some time one of them might have got in touch to ask 'did you get my card?' ... They feel like old friends. I'd love to know if the person who should be receiving the cards is still alive or has emigrated.

"And it would be nice to meet the people sending the cards so I could shake their hand and give them a Christmas card with my best wishes."

Mrs Wild, the former owner of an engineering firm, started receiving the cards in 1979 after she bought her three-bedroom detached home in Worcester from a woman called Dawn.

She spent years quizzing neighbours in a bid to solve the puzzle. But now she has given up and puts the card in a place of honour every Christmas.

Her only clues are that the cards have a Gloucester postmark and are addressed to Mrs R Hales, and they contain a message sending best wishes to "Ann and Roger and family".

This year's card to Mrs Hales shows a church covered in snow. Auntie Muriel's card shows a teddy bear playing a violin and is addressed to "Mrs M Larkin c/o Mrs R Hales". The greeting inside says: "To Auntie Muriel with best wishes from Pat, Roger and family".

"If only I knew who she was," said Mrs Wild.

Churches seek to feed refugees denied benefits

Shelter: Refugees sharing a meal at the Welcare centre in Brent, north-west London Photograph: Edward Sykes

Andrew Brown
Religious Affairs Correspondent

This Christmas, hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers will be fed and helped by Christian groups because many are now not eligible for benefits. And for the first time in 50 years, the Red Cross will be distributing food parcels in Britain – to 200 asylum seekers who attend a day centre in south London.

The changes in the benefits laws introduced by the Government were opposed by Cardinal Basil Hume and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and now churches in many parts of the country are trying to mitigate the effects of the new rules. The Bible is much clearer about asylum seekers than about sexual morality: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong" God said to Moses; and later, "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

In one of the dingy suburban streets of Brent in north-west London, a church hall has become a meeting place and feeding station for some of the 1,200 refugees in London left stranded by the present regulations. It is one of many such shelters. There is one in Brixton, south of the Thames, to which people have walked five miles for a meal. At the Welcare centre in Brent, they provide food parcels, communal meals once a week for up to 120 people, about half of them children, and legal services and help with welfare bureaucracy to many more.

Although the Court of Appeal decided last autumn that local authorities had a duty to help save such people from destitution, this decision is being appealed against by the Government, and in the meantime, the levels of support being offered are hardly generous. The Church Urban Fund, an Anglican charity set up in 1985, knows of one mother with two children who is given £2 a day to feed them all, and another man expected to live on a diet of bread and milk.

Peter Stobart, who set up the Brent Welcare centre, came there from Hong Kong, where he had worked for 10 years with people who slept on the streets. Out there, he said, people simply died if they had no family to look after them. In London, things were still better than that. "The ones who come here have all got a roof over their heads. At the moment nobody has ended up out on the street; yet," he said.

Many of the refugees have left scenes of considerable horror. One 20-year-old Angolan had fingers chopped off while being tortured. In another Angolan family a nine-year-old boy was killed and his mother raped in front of the other children because their father – whom the attackers had come for – had fled.

Maha, an Iraqi woman in the Brent Welcare shelter, said that her husband had been a prosperous watchmaker, with two shops of his own, before he offended the secret police. They had tortured him; and when he was released from prison, the family liquidated what assets they had and paid $20,000 (£12,000) to a Kurdish group which got them out of the country and into Britain on forged passports. It had taken three years for the Home office to decide that they were genuine refugees. They still had no work, although she was studying English.

It seemed from Maha's story that the Christian churches had provided at least as much fellowship as the mosque had done, partly because they have access to much greater resources. Food parcels are sent to the Welcare project from churches all over the country. The Church Urban Fund says that the reaction to the Asylum Bill could be the biggest ecumenical project in Britain.

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JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

news

Bands film prompts millionaire to save gala with his brass

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

A New Zealand millionaire is putting up £20,000 to rescue the Durham miners' gala after seeing the hit film *Brassed Off*, which follows the trials and tribulations of a colliery band.

The miners feared that they would have to break a 113-year tradition and cancel next year's gala, in July, because they could not find the money to pay for the brass bands.

Michael Watt, who runs an international television production and distribution company, had anonymously given £60,000 over three years to keep the gala alive, but that ran out this year. After seeing the film, he called his friend Rodney Bickerstaffe, leader of the public workers' union, Unison, and said it had moved him so much he would back the gala for another year.

Mr Bickerstaffe said: "I am absolutely delighted that somebody who only has had a minimal contact with the North-east and who has not got anything out of it himself, is prepared to put up the money for a community festival of such historic importance. It is a marvellous gesture."

Mr Watt is in America but his praises were being sung in Durham by David Hopper, general secretary of the NUM for the Durham district, which organises the event. "He is a very generous man," he said. "To find sponsorship from a man from the other side of the Southern hemisphere without any connection with the North-east is marvellous – we owe him a debt of gratitude which is unrepayable.

"Every band that plays at the gala gets paid an allowance. The bands will die without finance. And we need to maintain that social side of the brass bands. Whoever did *Brassed Off* did their research well, because it was exactly like that in this region."

Since the closure of the pits, which used to provide financial support, the bands have found it hard to make ends meet. Some have won a lifeline from the National Lottery but the Durham gala both provided a coveted platform for the best bands, and some handy income. The miners made an appeal through the Labour movement for funding, but not enough was found to guarantee that the show could go on.

After seeing the movie, Mr Watt got one of his managers to contact the organisers last week and tell them he would provide £20,000 for next year. Mr Hopper thought someone was pulling his leg when he was told to ring a "Mr Christmas" for the money. He discovered that Carl Christmas had indeed left him the message, and the money was available.

Mr Cropper believes it could help to relieve some of the hardship locally, if only for a day. "Easington has four times the national average for suicides and they are young miners," he said. "There is supposed to be a feel-good factor but these lads, if they have work, are getting paid less than they got 15 years ago. There is destitution in the North-east. Mr Watt has taken the attitude of saying, 'Just give people a chance'. He has provided an inspiration, which is what the gala traditionally is about."

The gala's organisers hope that in July, they will have the first Labour Prime Minister attending it for two decades.

Then a hero: Clement Attlee, Labour Prime Minister, at the gala. The organisers hope Tony Blair will be there next year Photograph: Daily Mirror

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Fish quota deal to cut deep into sole catch

Katherine Butler
Brussels

Britain's trawler fleets face new limits on the amount of fish they can catch in 1997 following the European Union's annual carve up of fishing quotas.

Struck at dawn yesterday the agreement represents a compromise between Brussels which demanded cuts to protect scarce stocks, and EU governments – all of whom won concessions for their fishermen against the advice of scientists.

But the deal upset Northern Ireland fishermen, whose MPs were offered special assurances ahead of abstaining in last Monday's House of Commons fishing vote. It also exposed strains in Anglo-Irish relations. The Fisheries minister Tony Baldry accused Dublin of behaving like "a dog in the manger" towards Northern Ireland and there were some heated exchanges between United Kingdom and Irish fishing leaders who had gathered outside the meeting.

Mr Baldry levelled his charge after Ireland invoked an entitlement called the Hague Preference to secure additional fishing rights in the Irish Sea, knocking tonnages off the anticipated UK quota for Irish Sea plaice and whiting.

Mr Baldry insisted after the meeting that he had mitigated the disadvantages for Northern Ireland arising from Dublin's decision to demand a "quota swap". But Dick James of the Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation, said the Government would have to "buy back" British quota from Ireland to satisfy the demands of Ulster fleets. "To me it rankles, because basically we're buying our own fish back and the fish we are using to buy it back will be sorely missed," Mr James said.

Irish officials suggested that it was London's unfair distribution of national quota between Northern Ireland and Scotland which was placing Ulster at a disadvantage rather than the entitlements of the Republic.

The steepest cuts for Britain fall on some key species such as North Sea sole, which is down 22 per cent although the commission had sought a 50 per cent cut. North Sea plaice is down 7 per cent and west of Scotland haddock catches down by 13 per cent, but Mr Baldry claimed credit for the best outcome possible in a difficult climate.

"Fishermen are pretty sensible about this. They realise that North Sea sole is one of the stocks which is in some difficulty. They don't want to see the stocks collapse any more than we do. Sole cannot endure a higher catch rate now because it needs time to recover," he said.

Britain's quotas for 1997 amount to a freeze on last year's cuts although fleets will be allowed to catch more cod in the west of Scotland and more herring in the North Sea, while the quota for sole in the English Channel will rise by 11 per cent and the haddock catch there will be doubled. These improvements were grudgingly welcomed by Barrie Deas of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. "The outcome depends where you fish and what you fish for. It is good news for fishermen catching haddock in the English Channel and Irish Sea but bad news for those going after North Sea sole," he said.

The worst of the cutbacks are yet to come. Ministers failed to agree plans for the long-term scaling back of fleets and capacity which the European Commissioner for Fisheries, Emma Bonino, wants to see response to scientific warnings about chronically depleted stocks. A deadline for negotiations on her five-year plan has been set for next April although Britain is refuses to contemplate any further downsizing until the EU loophole which allows Spanish "quota hoppers" to take advantage of British fishing rights has been addressed.

Lethal fireworks get sales ban

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Fireworks which caused two deaths during this year's bonfire night celebrations were banned from sale to the public under emergency measures brought in by ministers last night. The aerial shell and aerial maroon fireworks, often imported from China, are launched from mortar tubes.

Last month a primary head teacher died when one of the fireworks exploded in his face. David Hattersley, 45, was presiding over a display at Hazlemere Church of England Combined School in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. A City trader, Steve Tincke, 34, died after lighting one of the fireworks in his garden in Dartford, Kent.

Last night John Taylor, the consumer affairs minister, said the fireworks should only be used in public displays. He was anxious to ensure there were no more fatalities or injuries over Christmas and New Year. "It has now become clear that aerial shells and aerial maroons pose a very high risk to users ... I have taken action to make sure they are only supplied to those who are in the business of operating fireworks displays, or are in the business of supplying fireworks."

Labour welcomed the move but said its own campaign had forced the Government into the decision. Nigel Griffiths, consumer affairs spokesman, said the party had been campaigning for three years to have the shells banned and to reinstate a series of firework safety measures which the Government had scrapped.

هكذا من الأصل

DoH letter 'copied' from drug lobby firm

Official accused of lifting denial over chemical spray link to BSE

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The Department of Health has come under fire after one of its civil servants used large chunks of text supplied by drug company representatives in a letter to a concerned member of the public.

The use of extensive wording from the National Office of Animal Health Limited (Noah) by the middle-ranking official raises questions about the department's independence. Noah represents the companies which make veterinary drugs.

The letter was written to Dr Peter Gold in East Brent, Somerset, by Dr Tim Marrs, a branch leader in the department covering pesticides and veterinary medicines. Dr Gold had sent a letter to the department calling on it to investigate an alleged link between the use of organophosphate (OP) chemicals as a veterinary medicine and the spread of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).

The Independent has seen Dr Marrs' reply, written last month and aimed at demolishing any suggestion of a connection.

Three quarters of his 500-word letter is virtually identical to a "position paper" on the alleged link between OPs and BSE published earlier this year by Noah. There were minor changes in sentence order, a few extra words inserted (such as "you should note that") and a few sentences were cut.

Having seen the letter, Noah's communications executive Alison Glennon said: "They [the Department of Health] have taken it from our document." She said Noah had no problem with the department doing this. "We're quite happy about it – what we said is all in the public domain."

But the department denied Dr Marrs had simply duplicated most of the text from Noah, claiming that both his words and those used by the drugs companies' representative had been cleared by the Government's Veterinary Medicines Directorate and had used information from the European Commission.

"The facts in both documents are true and you'd expect them to be very similar if they drew on the same sources," said a spokeswoman.

The match between the two was spotted by Mark Purdey, the Somerset dairy farmer who first suggested the OP-BSE link, after Dr Gold, a university lecturer and Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate, sent him the correspondence. "As Government continually insists on their totally non-hand-in-glove relationship with the chemical giants, this letter sadly betrays their true position," he says.

Mr Purdey believes the pouring of OP chemicals, which are powerful insecticides, onto the backs of cattle to control warble fly infestation in the 1980s sparked the BSE epidemic. OPs are the chemicals used in sheep dip which are alleged to have destroyed the health of many farmers and are thought to be behind Gulf War syndrome.

The Government, the OP manufacturers and most scientists studying the epidemic say the OP-BSE theory fails to hold water. They prefer the theory that the epidemic originated when feed containing the remains of sheep with scrapie was eaten by cattle.

According to this the disease agent, a protein, became established in cows and spread rapidly as rendered, ground-up cattle remains were then fed to cattle. But Mr Purdey says further important evidence to back his alternative will soon emerge. "I'm really excited about the future of it," he said.

... All that's left of these cattle grazing on our green and pleasant land

Killing fields: The beef cull backlog has been cleared but there are thousands of tonnes of meat and bonemeal powder left to be incinerated Photograph: Jeffrey Phelps

Burning question for the slaughter mountain

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

Six warehouses in Britain hold the strangest and saddest of all farm surplus mountains. More than a million cows have been turned into great mounds of grey brown powder – the meat and bone meal which remain after the great slaughter of cattle caused by the BSE epidemic.

Three warehouses are full, and the Government's Intervention Board for Agriculture – which runs the slaughter programme – has had to press three others into service. The same board used to store the notorious grain and beef mountains produced by the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy.

This week the Government proudly declared that – as promised – it had cleared the backlog of cattle waiting to be killed under the over-30-month-old scheme. Some 1,100,000 animals have died.

But it still has to deal with the huge and growing hazardous waste disposal problem posed by the 135,000 tonnes of powder – what remains of the cattle flesh and bone after it has been minced, cooked, heat-dried and ground up by the rendering industry.

The Government says all of this material has to be incinerated to destroy the BSE agent – an extraordinarily resilient protein. But very little of the incineration capacity has been secured. The burning has to happen at 850C or higher to ensure the infectivity is destroyed.

Meanwhile, fresh meat and bone meal and tallow continue to arrive in the stockpiles. For a start, there are 230,000 cattle which are now frozen in cold stores.

Then there are the 18,000 or so cattle which will continue to be slaughtered each week now that the backlog has been cleared. Finally, there are another100,000 dairy cattle to be killed in a further cull which was announced by the Government this week.

The Government has been considering the option of burning these wastes in huge coal and oil burning power stations for six months. They alone have the capacity to consume all of the material within a few weeks.

Yesterday neither the Government nor the generating companies would hazard a guess about when or where burning might start.

A spokesman for National Power said it would cost about £5m to make the necessary modifications to a power station boiler.

The Intervention Board has one incineration contract with a toxic waste disposal company, Rechem. But its high temperature incinerator at Hythe, in Hampshire, will only handle 20,000 tonnes of meat and bone meal a year.

The board said it hoped to reach an agreement with an unnamed company to burn more meat and bone meal. It also wants to burn large numbers of carcasses directly without rendering and hopes to have 10 incinerators in action soon. It already has a contract with another incinerator to burn 2,000 carcasses a week, and hopes to quadruple this.

Jean Alty, of the Intervention Board, said: "There's no problem or health hazard in storing [the carcasses] for a long time but we'd prefer not to."

Tebbit rebukes Major over Tory cheating

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The Prime Minister backed down yesterday over allegations that the Government cheated in the "pairing" row as he came under attack from a former Tory party chairman over the incident.

John Major said in a television interview that the row over government whips deliberately pairing some of their MPs with more than one opposition member in order to win a crucial vote on Monday was "arcane".

But Lord Tebbit, writing in *The Sun* newspaper, said he believed the Government had been involved in foul play. "I call that cheating. I asked three former Tory chief whips. They all called it cheating. I could not find any senior Tory, except ministers, who thought that it was a proper way to behave. Most of them, too, called it cheating." Lord Tebbit reminded his readers that the last time an MP was accused of cheating on a pairing arrangement was 20 years ago. Michael Heseltine was so incensed that he lost control and swung the parliamentary mace around his head.

Mr Major, whose party had compounded its problems by falsely accusing Labour of cheating on Tuesday in order to defeat the Government on its Stalking Bill, said there seemed to have been some mistake.

Even without that, the Government would have won Monday's fisheries vote, he added. "Pairing arrangements generally are personal arrangements, though sometimes they're conducted on a different level. Quite what misunderstandings occurred here, I don't know."

Mr Major agreed that it would matter if the public felt politicians had behaved dishonourably, but added that he did not believe that had happened.

Donald Dewar, Labour's chief whip, responded: "When he was questioned today about his party's cheating, John Major was both evasive and defensive. It is time for a full and public apology from Michael Heseltine and Brian Mahwhinney, who are still pathetically trying to defend the indefensible."

Labour was claiming a victory in the pairing war last night. Accusations that it, too had cheated by allowing 15 MPs to vote on Tuesday when they had promised not to do so had proved to be false in 13 of the cases. The other two MPs apologised for voting without thinking what they were doing. "It was like Pavlov's dogs. I just heard the bells," one said.

BBC defends decision to break last taboo by filming death

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

The BBC defended itself yesterday against the accusation of being "unbelievably insensitive" in its attempts to break the last television taboo: by showing people dying of illness for a major science series.

Mary Whitehouse, founder of the Viewers' and Listeners' Association which recently backed the BBC's campaign for a higher licence fee, said showing such events would be "an intrusion into family grief with the whole world watching".

She added: "I would like to see the governors look into it and give their verdict. I would be surprised if they approved."

The BBC's newly updated producer's guidelines, adherence to which is written into staff contracts, says: "The dead should be treated with respect and not shown unless there are compelling reasons for doing so. Close-ups should generally be be avoided. When such scenes are justified they must not be lingered over."

But a BBC spokesman said that while filming was continuing for the series of "several" terminally ill patients, one with cancer, it was with the permission of the patients; their doctors and their relatives.

"We have not decided whether to film their death," she said. "If that decision was taken, it would be taken with the full, informed consent of the patient and their relatives, and it would also never be shown without the greatest respect for the sensibilities of viewers.

"We would also like to add that these people have given the subject of their death a lot of thought. This in itself may help those who face what is a very frightening but universal experience."

The £4m BBC1 series, with the working title *The Human Body*, is scheduled for transmission in 1998. It is to attempt to do for human biology what *The Private Life of Plants* did for the world's flora. It will cover the seven ages of man, from conception to grave, in seven 50-minute episodes and represents the BBC's first attempt in 20 years to tackle a comprehensive study of the subject.

The series is the brainchild of Jana Bennett, head of the BBC's science department. While acknowledging the final programme on dying and death will raise ethical issues, she told *Broadcast* magazine: "The processes of death are fundamental to basic biology."

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news

Historic amputation takes its place at cutting edge of drama

This won't hurt: Actors and anaesthetists at University College Hospital in London re-enact the leg amputation of Frederick Churchill, a butler – and the first patient in England to be publicly placed under surgical anaesthesia – on 21 December 1846, at the hospital Photograph: John Voos

Mother, 22, who killed baby is put on probation

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The despairing daughter of a millionaire who killed her newborn baby son after secretly giving birth, yesterday agreed to undergo treatment as a condition of a three-year probation order.

Emma Gifford, 22, the daughter of retired Rank Organisation chief executive Michael Gifford, had felt unable to tell anyone about the pregnancy, which followed the birth of another child she had given up for adoption 14 months earlier.

The first her family knew of the second birth, last April, was when her brother eventually found the baby's body in the freezer at her flat in South Kensington, south-west London. Family support groups described the case as "tragic".

Initially, there was insufficient evidence for police to bring a charge of infanticide. But Gifford later made a full confession in an attempt to recover from the double trauma of the death and the adoption of her first son, William Boyce, prosecution counsel, told the Old Bailey in London.

Gifford, who the court heard had suffered from depression since she was13 and had dropped out of university, was able to keep the pregnancy secret because she barely showed any physical signs.

One night last April she returned from her work at a florists at about midnight and gave birth on the bathroom floor two to three hours later. She agonised over the secret baby until 5pm the next day. "She felt as though she had no option. She didn't know what to do," Mr Boyce said.

She told police that she placed a flannel over the baby's face, covered his head with a pair of her boyfriend's pyjama bottoms and then put a pillow over his head for a couple of minutes. She was sick, then got ready for work, later wrapping the body in clothes and a plastic bag. After confessing, Gifford pleaded guilty to infanticide.

Rebecca Poulet QC, defending, said that during childhood Gifford had been caught between an alcoholic mother and an absent father who worked long hours.

Emma Gifford leaving the Old Bailey yesterday

Sir Lawrence Verney, the Recorder of London, told Gifford: "The law realises that immediately at and after giving birth there may be a time when the balance of the mother's mind is disturbed by reason of her not having recovered from the effects of giving birth." Her decision to go to the police was "very much to your credit".

Another charge of attempting to conceal the birth was ordered to lie on the file.

Emma Gifford discovered that she was expecting the first child in 1994 but did not dare to tell either her boyfriend, Joseph Ernst, a former architecture student at university, or her father, and gave birth in hospital without the support of friends or family.

A long search for an adoptive family and Mr Ernst's decision to split up with Gifford took its toll on her state of mind and was to contribute to her deep trauma when she discovered that she was again pregnant by Mr Ernst in 1995.

A spokeswoman for the Family Planning Association said: "The case does emphasise the need to make sure that young people know there are agencies designed to listen and provide support in this kind of situation. It is just tragic that this young woman didn't feel she could turn to them for help."

Unions move to sign up child workers

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Schoolchildren, some as young as 13, are being signed up as members by trade unions amid concern that thousands nationwide are working illegally for unscrupulous employers.

Employers are legally obliged to register workers up to 16 with local education authorities, but in practice the majority ignore the system. This means that there is no control over the hours children are working, or whether they are filling unsuitable jobs – such as on building sites or in factories.

The GMB general workers' union has signed up 200 children after visiting schools and offering pupils free membership in a deal that entitles them to free legal advice if they have problems at work. The recruitment drive, launched in a pilot programme in Newcastle upon Tyne and due to be extended next year, was devised after research revealed that an estimated 600,000 children were working outside the law in evening and weekend jobs.

A report from the Labour Research Department last year found that seven out of eight child workers were doing so illegally, while only 15 out of 108 education authorities had child-employment officers.

Last week, a study by Unicef, the United Nations children's organisation, suggested that one-quarter of British 11-year-olds were working, raising concerns over the effect on their education. Chris Preston of the GMB's northern office said that the union wanted to offer them some form of protection. Those who are not registered are not covered by insurance at work, so they may not receive compensation if they have an accident.

Mr Preston said: "The bylaws dealing with children's employment are outdated and not designed to cope with the situation in Nineties." The recruitment drive allowed the union to find out more about the extent of illegal employment of children, he said.

Mounting concern over the welfare of those employed outside the law comes as the Department of Health prepares to abolish the two-hour limit for children working on Sundays. Draft plans would permit 13- and 14-year-olds to work for five hours and 15- and 16-year-olds to work for eight hours. At present, a 15-year-old can work for two hours on schools days and Sundays and eight hours on Saturdays. The weekly permitted total of 20 hours would not change.

Local authorities have bylaws covering children's hours but in practice most follow the the department's guidelines.

Chris Pond, director of the Low Pay Unit which researches and campaigns on pay issues, said that many working children were at risk of accident or injury. A survey of 2,000 children in Birmingham revealed that one-third had had some form of accident, including being cut by knives or stuck through the hand with needles.

"Excessive work not only exploits children but can have an impact on their education or achievement in terms of homework or attentiveness in class," Mr Pond said.

The GMB has also launched a campaign to sign up college students, who are increasingly working during term time as well as during vacations to supplement their grant. A pilot scheme offering students at the London School of Economics membership for 10p a week is to be extended next year to other universities in the South-east, including Cambridge. The union offers students legal cover in the event of an accident or tribunal and advice and information on employment rights.

Animals' rough sea crossings 'lawful'

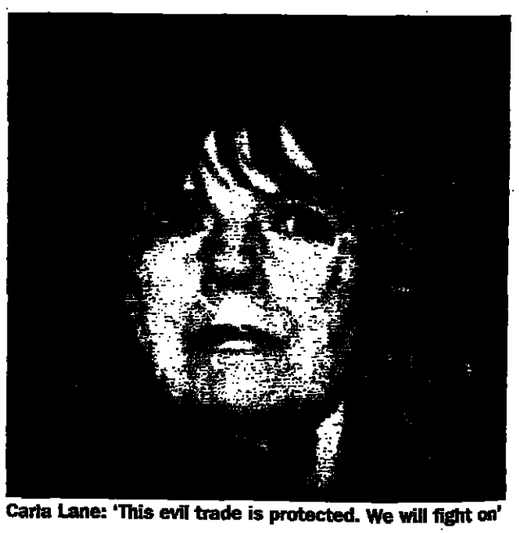
A High Court judge yesterday rejected accusations by animal rights protesters that the Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, was operating an unlawful policy which allowed ferries carrying farm animals to the Continent to sail in bad weather conditions likely to cause live cargoes injury and suffering.

The accusations were made during a court hearing packed with animal rights campaigners including the television screen writer, Carla Lane.

The Protesters Animal Information Network (Pain) argued that ferry operators were allowed, for commercial reasons, to sail in rough weather when vessel inspectors ought to be stopping them.

But Mr Justice Latham ruled: "In the light of the evidence it is not possible to conclude that [the Ministry of Agriculture] have put in place or are operating an unlawful policy."

Pain director Ms Lane said: "The fact is we did prove that animals went out in rough seas contrary to the rules. The minister, we feel, was responsible. But we could not actually prove that he had a policy of not intervening and stopping them."



Carla Lane: 'This evil trade is protected. We will fight on'

Pain was attacking the activities of animal ferry operators based at Channel ports including Dover, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, and Brightlingsea, Essex. Its counsel, Richard Barton, argued that Mr Hogg was under a duty imposed by the 1994 Welfare of Animals during Transport Order to prevent "serious risk of injury, suffering or death" to animals bound for the Continent but had failed to issue the appropriate guidelines to inspectors, and they had failed to act.

He said in rough weather the chartered boats – smaller vessels than cross-Channel passenger ferries – rolled considerably, putting the animal cargoes at risk of injury.

Dismissing their application for judicial review, the judge ordered the protesters to pay the ministry's legal costs, estimated at about £30,000.

Later Ms Lane said: "We are enraged. This evil trade appears to be protected and once again the people of this country have been ignored.

"We will fight on, not violently but certainly noisily."

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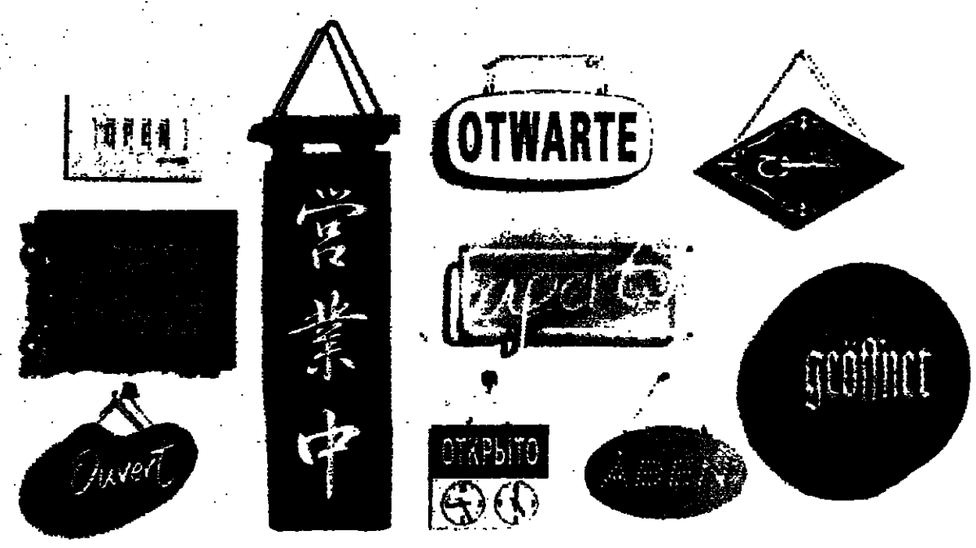

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Peking unstitches banner of democracy

A defiant China is tightening its grip on power. **Stephen Vines** reports from Hong Kong

Hong Kong — The final piece of China's rival power structure in Hong Kong will be slotted into place today when a 400-strong committee meets in the border town of Shenzhen to select members of a Provisional Legislative Council which will run in tandem with the elected legislature for the last six months of colonial rule.

Despite the strong British protests issued yesterday, the new body is likely to remain in existence for 18 months, after which China has promised to hold elections, but under a system more closely resembling the colonial electoral system abolished in 1994 and replaced by a widening of the franchise.

The Hong Kong government under Governor Chris Patten refuses to recognise the provisional council and will not co-operate. His successor, Tung Chee-hwa, has repeatedly urged Mr Patten to "face reality" and offer support for the new body.

One aspect of this reality is that the provisional legislature will not have a single member who is unacceptable to the Chinese government. One hundred and thirty candidates have put their names forward for the 60 seats on offer. All have been vetted and approved by Chinese officials who were assisted by the refusal of any members of the democratic camp to offer themselves for selection.

However, there are some nominal democrats in the line-up of hopefuls, notably members of a party called the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood which has emerged as China's chosen vehicle for the expression of "acceptable" pro-democracy views. The hard-core democrats, mainly in the Democratic Party, Hong Kong's largest and most popular party, will have nothing to do with contest, although a renegade member is trying to secure selection.

China hopes that in the next 18 months the popular democrats can be sufficiently marginalised to ensure that they are no longer a major electoral force when something approaching a real election is called.

The problem is that China's plans to give credibility to the new body are being undermined by members of the selection committee which will choose the new legislators. Many of the members have spent the past few days trying to fix up closed-door deals under which they will vote for each other and limit the number of candidates they select to minimise the chances of success for those excluded from the deals.

The horse-trading has come to light mainly because much of it has been unsuccessful. However, the shadow it is casting over the exercise was sufficient to cause Qian Qichen, China's vice-premier, who is presiding over the process, to issue a warning against the forming of cabals to pick members.

Another problem for the new body is that 26 candidates for selection were defeated in the 1995 elections and give every appearance of trying to overturn the popular mandate by ignoring the election.

In the aftermath of his defeat in the 1995 election, Tsang Yuk-shing, leader of the main pro-China party, told *The Independent* he would definitely not be seeking membership of the provisional body because this would give the impression of gaining "backdoor" admission to the legislature. Mr Tsang has since changed his mind and is standing alongside 12 of his party colleagues.

Most analysts believe that a large number of previously defeated candidates will win seats. They are likely to be joined by some heavyweight pro-Peking personalities, such as Leung Chun-ying, who is seen as a future head of government.

Also standing are 34 members of the existing 60-member Legislative Council, including its president, Andrew Wong. As most of them are also strong contenders for success, it remains to be seen how they will be able to serve both bodies. The suspicion is not that one body will overwhelm the other, but that six months of legislative paralysis is likely to ensue.

Red flag: A pro-democracy protestor wrapped in a banner bearing a petition clashes with Hong Kong police in Shenzhen yesterday Photograph:Reuters

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HALIFAX TESSA 2* Standard Rate	5.70	–	–	–	5.70	–	–	–	–	–
Matured Tessa*	5.70	–	4.56	–	5.70	–	–	–	–	–
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£50,000+	5.30	–	4.24	–	5.15	–	5.00	–	4.00	–
£25,000+	5.15	–	4.12	–	5.00	–	4.85	–	3.88	–
£10,000+	4.90	–	3.92	–	4.75	–	4.70	–	3.76	–
Monthly Income Option (Including bonus)										
£100,000+	5.47	5.60	4.38	4.46	5.33	5.45	5.09	5.20	4.07	4.14
£50,000+	5.19	5.30	4.15	4.22	5.04	5.15	4.90	5.00	3.92	3.98
£25,000+	5.04	5.15	4.03	4.10	4.90	5.00	4.76	4.85	3.81	3.87
£10,000+	4.80	4.90	3.84	3.90	4.66	4.75	4.61	4.70	3.69	3.74
SOLID GOLD*										
£50,000+	4.60	–	3.68	–	4.45	–	4.40	–	3.52	–
£25,000+	4.50	–	3.60	–	4.35	–	4.30	–	3.44	–
£10,000+	4.00	–	3.20	–	3.85	–	4.00	–	3.20	–
£5,000+	3.25	–	2.60	–	3.10	–	3.15	–	2.52	–
£500+	3.00	–	2.40	–	2.85	–	2.85	–	2.28	–
Monthly Income Option										
£50,000+	4.51	4.60	3.61	3.67	4.36	4.45	4.31	4.40	3.45	3.51
£25,000+	4.41	4.50	3.53	3.59	4.27	4.35	4.22	4.30	3.38	3.43
£10,000+	3.93	4.00	3.14	3.19	3.78	3.85	3.93	4.00	3.14	3.19
£5,000+	3.20	3.25	2.56	2.59	3.06	3.10	3.11	3.15	2.49	2.52
£500+	2.96	3.00	2.37	2.39	2.81	2.85	2.81	2.85	2.25	2.27
LIQUID GOLD*										
£25,000+	3.50	–	2.80	–	3.35	–	3.25	–	2.60	–
£10,000+	3.25	–	2.60	–	3.10	–	3.10	–	2.48	–
£5,000+	2.95	–	2.36	–	2.80	–	2.75	–	2.20	–
£2,500+	2.65	–	2.12	–	2.50	–	2.40	–	1.92	–
£500+	2.45	–	1.96	–	2.30	–	2.20	–	1.76	–
£50+	0.50	–	0.40	–	0.50	–	0.50	–	0.40	–
ASSET RESERVE CHEQUE ACCOUNT										
£50,000+	4.90	4.99	3.92	3.98	4.90	4.99	4.30	4.37	3.44	3.48
£25,000+	4.60	4.68	3.68	3.73	4.60	4.68	3.85	3.91	3.08	3.12
£10,000+	4.25	4.32	3.40	3.44	4.25	4.32	3.60	3.65	2.88	2.91
£5,000+	3.55	3.60	2.84	2.87	3.55	3.60	3.30	3.34	2.64	2.67
HALIFAX CURRENT ACCOUNT										
Standard £2,000+	1.00	1.00	0.80	0.80	–	–	–	–	–	–
£50 – £1,999	0.50	0.50	0.40	0.40	–	–	–	–	–	–
Youth (Under 18s)	3.40	3.45	2.72	2.75	–	–	–	–	–	–
Student	3.40	3.45	2.72	2.75	–	–	–	–	–	–
CARDCASH										
Standard £50+	0.50	0.50	0.40	0.40	–	–	–	–	–	–
Young Persons‡ (Under 21s) £1+	3.40	3.43	2.72	2.74	–	–	–	–	–	–
YOUNG SAVERS‡	3.40	3.43	2.72	2.74	3.40	3.43	–	–	–	–
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£10,000+	3.55	–	2.84	–	3.55	–	3.55	–	2.84	–
£2,000+	2.95	–	2.36	–	2.95	–	2.95	–	2.36	–
Monthly Income										
£10,000+	3.49	–	2.79	–	3.49	–	3.49	–	2.79	–
£2,000+	2.91	–	2.33	–	2.91	–	2.91	–	2.33	–
TREASURERS ACCOUNT*										
£2,500+	4.00	–	3.20	–	–	–	4.00	–	3.20	–
£500+	3.45	–	2.76	–	–	–	3.45	–	2.76	–
£1+	0.85	–	0.68	–	–	–	0.85	–	0.68	–
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Halifax TESSA*	5.70	–	–	–	5.70	–	–	–	–	–
Including maturity bonus	6.51	–	–	–	6.51	–	–	–	–	–
Special Reserve Bond*										
£10,000+	5.80	–	4.64	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Halifax Extra One Year Bond*										
£10,000+	6.20	–	1.96	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

*The rates shown apply to both the deposit and share account versions of these products.

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21st December 1996

HALIFAX

Gingrich pressed on cash falsehood

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

As a first wave of subpoenas hit the White House over possible campaign finance irregularities, new doubts surround Newt Gingrich's future as Speaker of the House, following the admission that he gave false evidence to a congressional committee investigating his political finances.

Through John Linder, a fellow Republican congressman from Georgia, Mr Gingrich has acknowledged that he gave wrong information to the House Ethics Committee, which for months has been investigating the allegedly improper use of tax-exempt money for a highly partisan college course taught by the Speaker until 1994. The row has already prompted the resignation of Mr Gingrich's ethics lawyer, who prepared the errant testimony, but insists his client read and approved it.

However arcane the matter at issue, the development spells nothing but trouble for the harsh spoken, fiercely ideological Mr Gingrich whose waning popularity was one reason for the decline in the Republicans' majority in the House to only 20 in the new Congress which assembles next month, with the election of a Speaker one of its first tasks.

The odds remain, albeit narrowly, that Mr Gingrich will be re-confirmed as the first Republican to hold the post in 40 years, and the first to serve a second consecutive term since 1928. But even among his supporters unease is growing, while

Under threat: Newt Gingrich may be ousted as Speaker

no crumb of sympathy is to be expected from Democrats, all too mindful of how a young Republican backbencher named Newt Gingrich led the campaign that ousted the then Democratic Speaker, Jim Wright, in 1989.

It is still not clear whether the much-delayed final report from the bipartisan Ethics Committee will be ready before 7 January, the day the Speaker is elected. But even before the latest disclosure at least a dozen nervous Republicans had indicated they wanted to see the report's conclusions before casting their votes.

Throughout the controversy, Mr Gingrich has insisted he has done nothing wrong, blaming his troubles on a Democratic witchhunt. The admission that he has in effect lied will only makes things worse: "Submitting false evidence is very, very serious," said Peter King, a New York Republican Congressman , who called for "a detailed statement" from the Speaker in person.

The one consolation for the Gingrich camp is the equal discomfort visited on the White House by a batch of Justice Department subpoenas issued to Clinton aides and the Democratic National Committee, seeking documents relating to dubious fund-raising by both the party and by the legal defence fund, set up to raise money to cover the President's Whitewater costs.

Among the individuals mentioned in the subpoenas are the Riady family of Indonesia and their American associate, the former Democratic fund-raiser and Commerce Department official John Huang, as well as the Arkansas businessman Charles Ya Lin Trie, who brought $460,000 (£290,000) of dubious contributions to the legal fund. These were subsequently returned.

Adding to this embarrassment was the revelation that Mr Trie helped to arrange for a Chinese arms dealer, whose company was later charged with gun-smuggling into the US, to attend a small White House reception where he met Mr Clinton. The President was "mystified" by the incident, his spokesman Mike McCurry said yesterday.

All too clearly though, both cases underscore how in the next 12 months, ethics investigations may have more impact on American politics than any pronouncement from the White House or law passed by Congress – and how the country's habit of turning political quarrels into criminal proceedings is as thriving as ever.

Zairean army prepares to seize rebel territory

Andrew Marshall and agencies

Zaire is preparing to launch a counteroffensive against rebels in the east of the country, threatening a fresh refugee crisis.

Ian Linden, director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, said that humanitarian officials recently in the region had reported evidence of a military build up in eastern Zaire. Zairean forces, reportedly assisted by foreign mercenaries, have concentrated around the towns of Walikale and Bunia, apparently in preparation for an assault on rebel-held towns.

Zaire's President, Mobutu Sese Soko, returned to Kinshasa this week after cancer treatment in Europe, and appointed a new army chief, General Mahele Bokungo. He pledged to recover territory lost to the Rwandan-backed rebels.

The rebels, backed by Uganda and Rwanda, have seized territory 300 miles long from north to south since October. Zairean troops put up little resistance but are now regrouping.

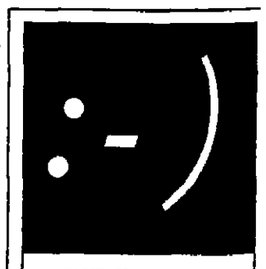
The rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, urged civilians this week to stay put, but his words failed to stem a stream of people leaving the eastern city of Goma, the biggest of several towns seized by rebels in November.

In a speech on rebel Star Radio, Mr Kabila, president of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire, said his forces would defeat any army counterattack launched by Mr Mobutu.

There is little evidence that external powers will permit Zaire to disintegrate in the face of an effort by the rebels to topple Mr Mobutu. The US State Department expressed strong support this week for Zaire remaining a unified state.

Mr Mobutu is now trying to regain his military and political grip on the country. Opposition representatives have urged him to dump Prime Minister Leon Kengo wa Dondo, and set this weekend as the deadline for forming a crisis government.

■ Amnesty International said yesterday it had received reports from Burundi that up to 500 people were massacred on 3 December in and around a Pentecostal church in Butaganza commune, Kayanza province. The army had reportedly herded villagers into the church, thrown grenades inside and shot those trying to escape. The wounded were bayoneted to death.



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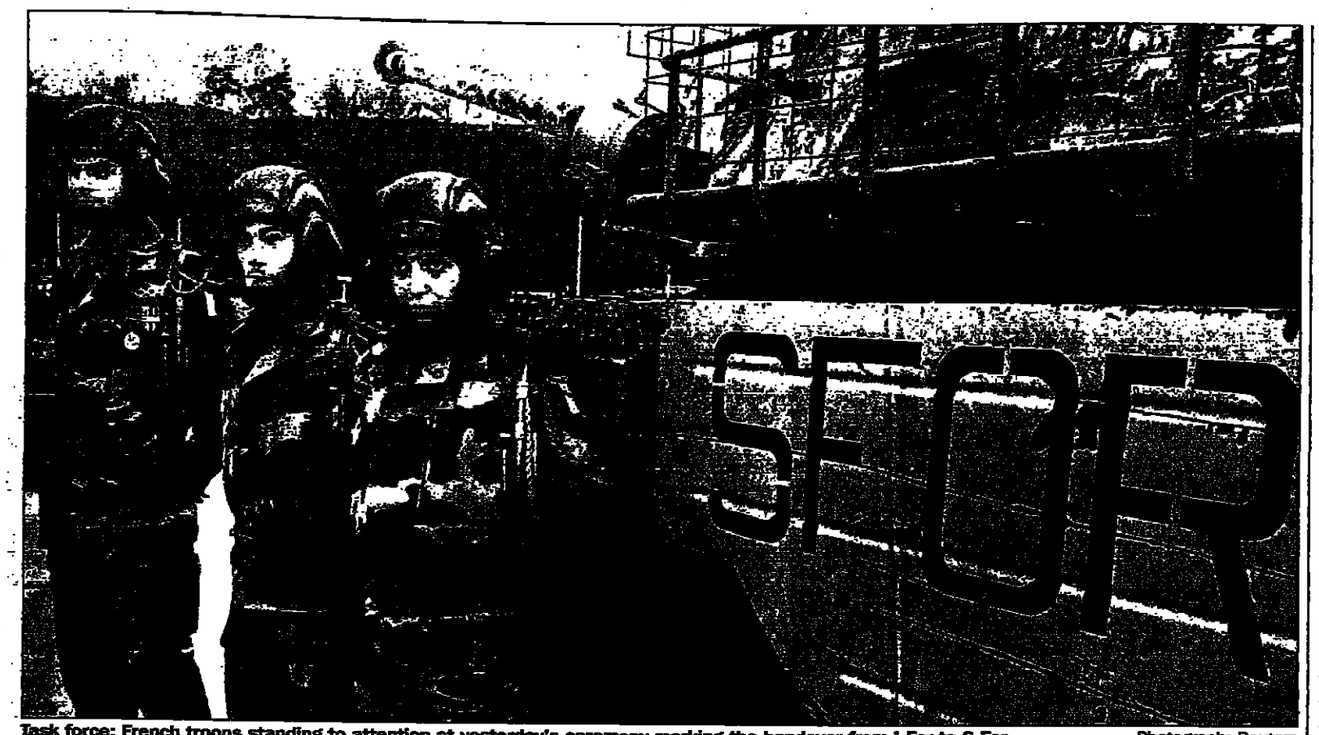

Task force: French troops standing to attention at yesterday's ceremony marking the handover from I-For to S-For Photograph: Reuters

New peace force to aid Bosnia's transition

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

In a brief ceremony yesterday morning, Nato's peace implementation force in Bosnia, I-For, became the stabilisation force – S-For.

Nato's supreme commander in Europe, General George Joulwan, and the commander of S-For, General William Crouch, saluted as an I-For flag was hauled down at the headquarters at Ilidza, outside Sarajevo, and an S-For flag hoisted in its place, but that was the only visible change.

At its height, I-For had 58,000 troops. S-For is 31,000 strong, but will reduce in size over the next 18 months.

The structure of the new force is similar to I-For, with a US commander, General Crouch, and a British deputy, Lieutenant-General Roderick Cordy-Simpson. British numbers in Bosnia are expected to decline from 6,000 to about 5,000 over the next few weeks.

The biggest change from I-For is the appearance of two German armoured infantry battalions. Previously, Germany has only provided support troops in Croatia. The Americans continue to control the northern sector, based at Tuzla, with two Russian airborne battalions under their control. The presence of the Russians is very important to Nato, which sees it as one of the main levers to persuade the Russians to cooperate with the alliance on enlargement.

S-For will have no more authority to go in search of wanted war criminals than I-For did. That is seen as the responsibility of the local forces.

S-For will concentrate on helping the process of civilian reconstruction, which still has a long way to go. Over the next 18 months the aim is to reduce the military presence and concentrate on reforming the police and encouraging freedom of movement.

Hostages plead for food as Peru digs in its heels

Ed McCullogh
Associated Press

Lima — Handwritten messages pressed to windows of the Japanese ambassador's residence yesterday demanded food and water and that utilities be reconnected to the compound where 375 people were being held hostage.

"No Food. No Water. The Hostages," read one message in English. Posters written with felt pens in German, Japanese, Italian and Spanish made similar pleas. Another message, written in Japanese, said "We are fine, they are planning to release more hostages." It was not clear whether the hostages were making the demands on their own or under pressure of their captors.

The Red Cross, the main intermediary between the rebels and the government, was taking drinking water into the compound on Thursday, but it wasn't clear when the utilities had been turned off. Lights were seen blazing throughout the evening on Thursday.

Local media reported yesterday that Peru has tentatively decided not to meet rebel demands to free their jailed colleagues. Ecuador, which has hostile relations with neighboring Peru, had said it would grant asylum to the rebels.

After a meeting on Thursday night, President Alberto Fujimori's Cabinet gave provisional approval to his proposal to reject the appeal to free any prisoners, radio and television reported.

Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent, who was among four hostages released to serve as negotiators, was to meet with the rebels' chief Victor Polay last night, the Lima daily La Republica reported. The paper said the meeting was among the rebel demands. Polay, the principal founder of the Tupac Amaru rebel movement in the early 1980s, was captured in 1992 and is serving a life sentence at a navy base in Lima's port of Callao.

In Washington, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Peruvian authorities must maintain contact with the guerrillas holding the hostages.

Former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, who was defeated by Fujimori in the 1995 elections, urged the government not to give in to the rebels' demands saying it would set a bad precedent. "It would encourage other terrorist groups, such as the Shining Path, to do the same," he said in an interview published in the daily El Comercio.

He noted such a demand for freedom could be made for Shining Path founder and leader Abimael Guzman, who is serving a life sentence without parole at the same prison as Polay.

The hostage crisis began Tuesday night when two dozen Tupac Amaru rebels seized hundreds of guests at a party at the Japanese ambassador's house. They have released nearly 200 hostages, mostly women, but about 375 men still are being held, the Red Cross said.

The rebels' main demand has been freedom for 300 of their jailed comrades. They also want transportation to a central jungle, a commitment to change the government's free-market economic policy and the payment of an unspecified "war tax." On Wednesday, they threatened to kill the hostages one by one until the government met their demands, but they let that deadline pass with no deaths and have not repeated the threat since.

Harsh realities on the constitutional

MOSCOW DAYS

Every night, accompanied by the dog, I nip out for a stroll, and have a quick look round to see if my neighbours have violated the constitution. They always have, usually on a colossal scale. The ground glistens with a fresh layer of shattered glass.

Few Russians are aware that every time they lob an empty vodka bottle into the bushes, or toss a cigarette packet out of the car window, or throw a pot of rancid stew out of the window of their flat (a particular favourite round my way), they ought, legally speaking, to be in big trouble.

We are not talking here about a piffling city by-law. Article 58 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation clearly states that Russians are "obliged to preserve nature and the environment".

I raise the question because the constitution has been on everyone's mind here this past week. Or at least it ought to have been. Last weekend was cancelled; like the Monty Python parrot, it ceased to be. While Surrey was shopping and Sydney was surfing, Russians (at least officially) were struggling into their offices and factories for the start of a seven-day working week, reviving memories of the Stalin era when the Soviet citizenry would be made to slave away non-stop to fulfil his five-year plans.

The source of this disruption goes back to Thursday of last week, a national public holiday. Knowing that the chances of a good turn-out after a day of eating and – more to the point – drinking, were slim, the authorities gave everyone Friday off as well. The pay-back was that Sunday was made into a working day. Meanwhile Saturday was already decreed a weekday in exchange for 3 July, election day, when the country was given a holiday to encourage them to vote.

Free speech withered on the vine around election time

Confused? Of course you are. So were the Russians. Some turned up for work at the weekend; some did not. And everyone seems to have had a very vague idea of what it was that they were celebrating in the first place. Unlike Soviet times, not much happened; there were no grand parades of rockets and tanks through Red Square in front of the party bigwigs.

In fact, Thursday was Constitution Day, marking the adoption of the constitution in 1993. Taken literally, the document might be worth a small and cautious toast. But, in practice, it is little short of a joke, a document far more honoured in the breach than the observance.

For example, it grants Russians the right to a jury trial, and to be considered innocent until proven guilty. Yet most defendants who appear in court find themselves peering through the bars of a cage at a judge and two lay assessors; juries are being experimented with, but only in nine of Russia's 89 republics or regions.

The constitution guarantees the right to free housing and a pension. Tell that to the thousands of people living on the streets, and the millions who have not received their pensions for months. Free speech is supposed to be protected, although it withered on the vine around election time, when the national media made sure that Mr Yeltsin's Communist-led rivals got about as much access to the airwaves as Sinn Fein during Britain's broadcasting ban.

One could go on. But perhaps that would be unreasonable. After all, this is a young country, where the rule of law, let alone a respect in it, has yet to be established. As the shattered glass, and my dog's cut paws, make so unpleasantly clear.

Phil Reeves

significant shorts

Nordic bikers convicted for fatal shoot-out

A Hell's Angel and two members of affilated gangs were convicted yesterday for the shoot-out at Copenhagen international airport on 10 March, in which a member of the Bandidos gang was killed and 10 others were injured.

The jury convicted a second Hell's Angel, but the court reversed the decision, saying there was insufficient evidence and opening the possibility of a new trial. Two other bikers were also acquitted. *AP – Copenhagen*

Woman cleared of fratricide

A woman who grew up believing she had killed her baby brother when she was a toddler has been told by authorities re-examining the case that her stepfather killed the boy and framed her.

Jan Barry Sandlin, 46, will face murder, aggravated assault and cruelty to children charges for the death of four-month-old Matthew Golder, in 1971. Mr Sandlin is to be extradited from Florida, where he is in prison for armed robbery. Tracy Rhame believed for 25 years that she had thrown her brother from his crib. *AP – Georgia*

Heart surgery for Marchais

Georges Marchais, former head of the French Communist Party, has undergone coronary bypass surgery, French state radio, France Info, has reported. Mr Marchais, 76, was rushed into hospital on 11 December and briefly put in intensive care last week, party officials said. *AP – Paris*

Shanghai's new £43m library

Shanghai yesterday opened its new library, the third largest in Asia after Peking and Tokyo. The library, which cost 600m yuan (£43m), houses 40 million books. *Reuters – Shanghai*

Swedish Nazi gold inquiry

Sweden said yesterday that it would launch a formal investigation of allegations by the World Jewish Congress (WJC) that Nazi gold from the Second World War had found its way into official Swedish bank vaults.

The Riksbank, Sweden's central bank, said: "We have found there is reason to carry out a fresh investigation of the bank's archives to discover if any light can be shed on the Riksbank's acquisition of so-called stolen gold." *Reuters – Stockholm*

Belgian steel workers riot

Hundreds of striking steel workers rioted in Tubize yesterday in protest over a European Union decision to block subsidies intended to rescue their ailing company. Workers from Forges de Clabecq steel mill were angry about the order to pay back 700m francs (£13m) subsidies from the Wallonia regional government. *AP – Brussels*

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OPEN EVERY DAY UNTIL CHRISTMAS

Festival of light: Christmas markets spring up in every town, offering Germans the chance to shop among the trinkets Photograph: Sipa

Germans live their dreams of Christmas past

Imre Karacs visits Nuremberg's chocolate-box world of medieval markets set up for the festive season

As if touched by pixie dust, German towns undergo a miraculous transformation this time of the year, sprouting pre-fab thatched cottages and ferris wheels in their midst, and enveloping themselves in the aromatic halo of mulled wine and the acrid smoke of sizzling Bratwurst. For a month, all social activities governed by the unremitting approach of the festive season begin and end here – at the Christmas market on the main square of every hamlet in the land.

They are not so much a retail outlet as a way of life. Other cultures may look upon their annual shopping foray as a chore, but to Germans Christmas offers the perfect excuse for a leisurely stroll down memory lane, into a chocolate-box world of fairy tales and good home cooking. You will find none of the pushing and shoving here that must be endured in the stores lining the adjacent streets. There is no early closing, and even on Sundays the market stays open. The tradition, dating back to the late Middle Ages, outranks more recent laws which impose a deathly curfew on the high streets.

This would not be Germany if ranking did not play an important role in the Christmas market ethos. There is a rigid pecking order among towns, each vying for a slot in the national league that defines their relative quality of life. The biggest cities try to put on the biggest markets, thus failing miserably to recreate the charm and intimacy of their smaller competitors.

At the apex of the hierarchy stands Nuremberg, its "Christ-child market" the grand-daddy of them all. Forget the Meistersinger and a couple of notable historical events in this century – Nuremberg derives its greatest fame among Germans from the huts that cover the cobble-stone square in front of the town hall in December. It is not the biggest, but it is the oldest, going back to 1559, and it boasts Germany's staple Christmas sweet, the Nürnberger Lebkuchen, which can only be bought and eaten during the festive season. For those of us addicted to this superior version of gingerbread, Christmas cannot come soon enough.

There are dozens of varieties of Lebkuchen on offer, at stalls run by Lebkuchen dynasties which guard their secret recipes and the family name as jealously as the great wine-makers of the Mosel. But that comes at the end of the tour. Visitors usually start at the kiosks selling a perplexing range of Wurst available in all shapes and sizes, from Nuremberg's celebrated small, spicy, variety, to the cucumber-shaped Krakauer catering for people with a higher tolerance for cholesterol. You can spend an afternoon crawling from sausage-stand to sausage-stand, alighting in between at stalls selling nothing but warm Glühwein. Then it is time for Lebkuchen, though perhaps not before a glass or three of sickly sweet liqueur.

Thus imbued with the spirit of the season, the hunt for presents can begin. This being an ancient market, the gifts on offer are timeless, made mostly from wholesome German wood. Pine as they might for Buzz Lightyear, the kids will be getting wooden Hansels and Gretels, or the little drummer boy in clay. Not one of dozens of stalls sells model train sets or – God forbid – computer games. There is wood everywhere, row upon row of brightly coloured, varnished figures dangling from pegs. For the grown-ups, there are gnomes and winged angels to adorn the garden, rocks and minerals for the mantlepiece, and books by the Grimm brothers for the shelves. Best-sellers, such as Daniel Goldhagen's infamous study of German war-time guilt, might just as well not exist.

The sound of the outside world wafts in occasionally, from the direction of the Belorussian fiddler in folk costume tormenting his instrument and innocent passers-by, and from the muffled ting-a-ling of "Jingle Bells" encased in a music box. Otherwise, one can almost imagine being back in 16th century Germany, standing somewhere near the spot where Hans Sachs, the greatest Meistersinger of all, cobbled his shoes together while practising his scales.

As a business venture, the market is a disaster. Margins on the trinkets are slim, and the vendors are complaining this year, as they have done for centuries, that the punters flock to their mock half-timbered huts to browse, not to part with their money. Yet despite their whingeing, the stall-holders will be back next year, and in the years to come, for as long as Germans will cling to the old-fashioned idea that there is more to Christmas than extravagant presents and fat profits.

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Dismay over wilting of the Greens' ideals

Imre Karacs
Bonn

They were once the nice guys of German politics, wilting custodians of "flower power", wedded to radical ideas about saving the planet. Now they stand accused by their own disaffected members of the heinous crime of pursuing "pure power politics".

The charge was levelled against the Greens by their MP, Vera Lengsfeld, who defected to the Christian Democrats this week in disgust. She said the Greens were preparing to strike a Faustian pact with the post-Communists of eastern Germany, a move which she, a former East German dissident, found repugnant.

It is a testament to the enduring legacy of their idealism that some Greens should be surprised by their party's single-minded attempt to enter government. But in truth, Petra Kelly's heirs long ago abandoned any pretence of trying to change the world from the outside and have inevitably been corrupted by the morsels of power picked up along the journey.

The goal of "zero growth" – economic stagnation for the sake of the environment – is but a distant memory, pacifism a hollow slogan. What remains of the original dream is the "four wheels bad, two wheels good" mantra, hostility to nuclear power, and the pledge to impose an "environmental tax" on fuel. Even these are subject to negotiations, however.

Of all the Greens' recent metamorphoses, their changing relationship with industry is the most striking. The party's avowed aim is to form the government with the Social Democrats after the next elections scheduled for 1998, a goal portrayed by the current administration as a recipe for mass unemployment and recession. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats have put out posters depicting factory machines covered in cobwebs, brought to a halt by a double-whammy of wage-inflating Reds and Luddite Greens. To improve their image among blue-collar workers, the Greens have lately been courting the trade unions.

Unfaithful followers: Petra Kelly's heirs want power

So now it's onwards and upwards for the left? Not quite. Their problem remains that the sum total of votes cast for a Red-Green alliance is less than the two parties would score if they were not shackled by the other. According to a poll published this week, the Greens would get about 14 per cent – twice what they gained in the last elections in 1994 – while the Social Democrats would be supported by 35 per cent of the voters.

That would be enough to oust Mr Kohl, but real elections have shown that many Social Democrats are prepared to vote against their own party if that is what it takes to keep the environmentalists out of government.

هكذا من الاصل

Stars to net billions in copyright deal

Mathew Horsman
Media Editor

Tired but jubilant officials of 160 nations yesterday agreed two far-reaching treaties on copyright for the digital age, clearing the way for artists, writers and recording companies to earn billions of pounds a year by distributing their work on the Internet.

The two treaties – on literary and artistic work and on the rights of performers and producers – mark the first time the international community has agreed terms to protect copyright for digitally transmitted material.

The "cyperspace copyright" agreement, subject to the approval of national governments, was seen as the biggest advance in copyright law since the Berne Convention on publications, agreed last century.

For the first time, recording artists will be protected when their material is distributed digitally. Jukka Liedes, the Finnish chairman of the talks, said. The protection is seen as necessary given that digital transmission allows for perfect copying.

"Madonna will now have the possibility for the first time to make her works available on the Internet and have her rights respected in the digital environment," he said. The recording industry believes the market for music on the Internet could be worth $2bn (£1.25bn) a year.

EMI of Britain expressed satisfaction at the outcome of three weeks of exhausting negotiations, under the sponsorship of the United Nations. "This is an excellent result," a spokesman said. "We have long wanted protection in the digital age. The treaties were crucial."

Other so-called "rights holders" – ranging from publishers to musicians to software writers – were also pleased, pointing out that a new market could now develop for "pay-as-you go" entertainment, delivered to the home by computer.

A third treaty, which had been drafted to cover databases, was dropped when it became clear no consensus could be reached.

Several negotiators said the proposals would have seen copyright protection extended to facts, and not just expression – marking a radical and undesirable shift in copyright law. Had the third treaty been passed, they argued, databases such as soccer league statistics and stock prices would have been included.

Negotiators also dropped a controversial draft section that would have made online Internet service providers responsible for copyright violations even when computer users merely "surfed" the Internet. Surfing requires the transitory copying of information, even if the user does not, in the end, seek access to it.

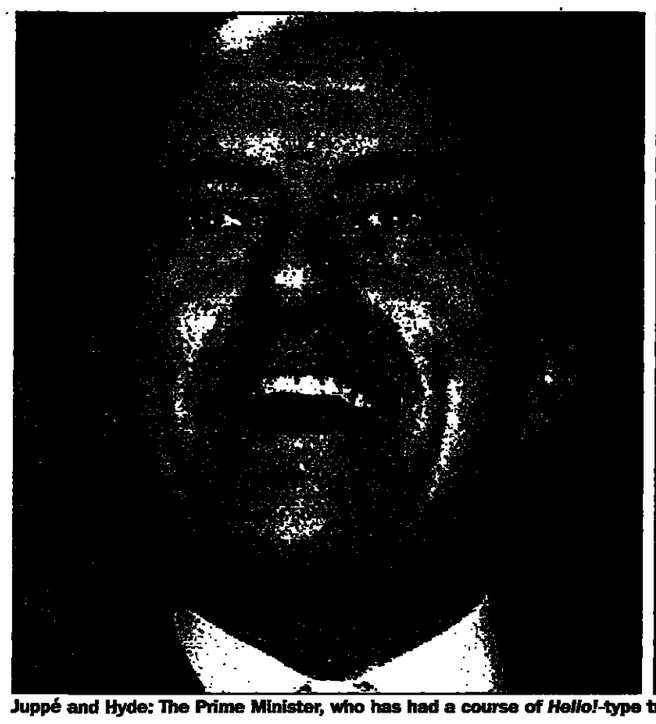
Service providers such as America Online and Microsoft furiously lobbied the US government to seek the removal of the offending clause, worried that they could be exposed to multi-billion-dollar claims by publishers and artists.

"So far so good," said Peter Harter of the Information Technology Association of America, a trade association. "We've done a lot of good here for the Internet."

The talks had been forced to a conclusion by the setting of yesterday's deadline. The 800 delegates will now return home, as the long process of national ratification begins.

■ A senior Iranian cleric called for restricting Internet access. "It should be limited to research and scientific centres," Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said in a sermon at Tehran University. "Beyond that, it is poison fed to people." Iran's 10,000-plus subscribers must already pledge not to access "un-Islamic" information.

Robot man or just a doting dad? Will the real Alain Juppé stand up?



Juppé and Hyde: The Prime Minister, who has had a course of *Hello!*-type treatment to make him more amenable to the disillusioned French public

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

The most hated man in France? The most unpopular prime minister since Edith Cresson? A lean and hungry politician of such cold efficiency as to merit the nickname "the walking computer"?

Not a bit of it. Alain Juppé, who has headed the French government for the past 18 months, is a sensitive soul who can sit happily for hours on the nursery floor with his baby daughter Clara in his arms, in the company of a large furry elephant and a menagerie of soft toys.

He is "a husband passionately in love" (with his wife); who enjoys nothing better than eating, drinking and travel and regrets only that he has so little time for reading and perhaps a little writing. He dreams of 1998, when, with the Gaullists victorious in the parliamentary elections, he can holiday in Ireland for a spot of fishing or, on reflection, in the Greek islands that have been his paradise since his youth.

This is Alain Juppé – the Relaunch, as brought to disgruntled voters this Christmas courtesy of the magazine *Paris-Match*, the publisher, Nil, and of course Mr Juppé, who, it appears, has finally understood that he has a communication problem.

From remote, compulsive technocrat, he has turned himself into a shy but blissfully happy family man whose single purpose as prime minister is to improve life for the French, and especially the next generation.

The seven-page *Paris-Match* feature, which appeared yesterday, shows Mr Juppé in many unaccustomed guises. As well as in the nursery, photographs depict him en famille beside the Christmas tree, in his office with Clara (one hand in his daughter's, one on his papers and pens), and depositing a kiss on his wife's hand during the soup course at a Bordeaux restaurant.

In the accompanying interview, he (and *Paris-Match*) go out of their way to present him as the opposite of his public image.

Heartless technocrat from the élite? "I was very unhappy at ENA [the élite school for administrators] ... I came from a very modest background." A computer brain?

He had a teacher who kept telling him how intelligent he was but he veered towards the arts and classics, not to maths and science, and was no good at philosophy.

Arrogant and thoughtless? Well, maybe, but only by mistake. He admits that describing the giant state firm Thomson as worth "only one franc" and the civil service as having "plenty of fat on it" were damaging public-relations gaffes.

But, in a passage of vintage Juppé, he also asks whether "communication skills" would solve everything.

"When you have to do something unpleasant and difficult, you can apply as many communications skills as you want, but people will still find it difficult to accept. It's far harder to accept a rise in VAT than a fall, however well you communicate it." The previous day, the Nil publishing house, a reliable establishment recommended, Mr Juppé says, by his friend, President Jacques Chirac, released his slim volume of intimate self-justification, *Between Ourselves*. It is in a similar vein to the *Paris-Match* interview, but with considerably more politics.

The dedication, for instance, is not, as might have been expected from the *Paris-Match* performance, to his wife and daughter, nor yet to the next generation of France, but to "each of his ministers" for the "quality and strength of their commitment at my side". The message is: "Anyone who says the team is weak and divided and I'm not a team player could not be further from the truth."

Paradoxically, Juppé Mark II appears just as the French seemed to have grudgingly reconciled themselves to Juppé Mark I. Mr Chirac has twice recently given his prime minister his support, the worst of the year's industrial unrest seems to be over, and Mr Juppé's poll ratings had finally edged up a fraction.

'Black' English gains California credence

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

In what some hail as an overdue move to help Afro-American students, but which others denounce as political correctness run amok, a Californian city is for the first time to recognise "black English" as a separate language, and seek bilingual educational help for students who speak it.

The benchmark decision by the school board of Oakland, near San Francisco, is aimed at enabling black students to make the transition in a "culturally sensitive" way to standard English.

In effect, the recommendation acknowledges black English – or "Ebonic" – as being linked to a separate culture. Some say its syntax can be traced back to Africa; peculiarities include unusual forms of the verb "to be", and idiosyncratic use of "gone" and "done" as auxiliary verbs.

Defenders of the scheme say that pilot projects involving 100 Oakland teachers have produced big improvements in language skills among African American students. But its foes insist it will only make a bad situation worse.

"The idea of treating little black kids as bilingual is an abomination," Professor John McWhorter of Berkeley University told the *Oakland Tribune*, "I say that as a black linguist. This is political correctness gone awry."

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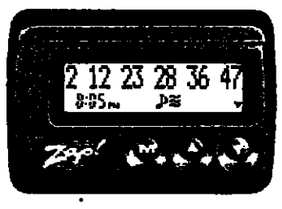

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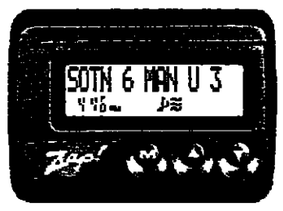

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obituaries / gazette

Professor Carl Sagan

The slow, deliberate voice of reason: Sagan's 13-part television series on astronomy, *Cosmos* (1980), is estimated to have been seen by almost 10 per cent of the world's population Photograph: AP

In 1994, Carl Sagan was presented with the Public Welfare Medal, the highest award of the US National Academy of Sciences. The citation rightly claimed that "No one has ever succeeded in conveying the wonder, excitement and joy of science as widely as Carl Sagan and few as well". Such skills are rare in any individual, yet Sagan was also a professional astronomer who carried out important research in planetary science – inspiring millions with his writings and broadcasts was just one of his many talents.

Carl Sagan had already decided to be an astronomer by the age of 13. Having told his grandfather of his choice of career, the response was "Yes, yes, but how will you make your living?" Sagan once said that one of the greatest moments of his life was when he was told by his high school biology teacher that there were people who were actually paid to do astronomy.

Suitably inspired he went on to obtain his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1960 and taught at the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory before taking a position at Cornell in 1968.

A recurring theme in his research was the origin of life. Following on from the laboratory experiments of Stanley Miller and Harold Urey, Sagan and his colleagues showed that it was relatively easy to produce amino acids, the building blocks of life, by exposing mixtures of methane, ammonia, water and hydrogen sulphide to long-wavelength ultraviolet light.

This work continued under Sagan's directorship of the Laboratory of Planetary Studies at Cornell. He also worked on studies of the surface of Mars and Venus, and he was an active participant in the highly successful Mariner, Viking and Voyager missions which sent robot spacecraft to explore the planets. In 1976 Sagan was appointed David Duncan Professor of Astronomy and Space Sciences, and from 1968 to 1979 he was Editor-in-Chief of *Icarus*, the International Journal of Solar System Studies. Sagan remained at Cornell for the rest of his life and his presence there enhanced the university's reputation as one of the leading centres for planetary research in the world.

A vociferous proponent of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (Seti), an experiment originally funded by Nasa to locate radio signals from other civilisations in outer space, Sagan investigated the practicalities of conveying information about ourselves to other intelligent beings. In 1977, he became the driving force behind a project to prepare a disk of recorded material for attachment to each of the two Voyager spacecraft due to reach interstellar space following their exploration of the outer solar system.

The project, detailed in the book *Murmurs of Earth* (1978), provided an opportunity to convey the essence of our own civilisation to others. As well as 118 photographs and greetings in almost 60 languages, the disk contained 90 minutes of music selected from around the world encompassing many cultures and traditions ("I would send the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach," remarked a biologist, "but that would be boasting".)

In 1978 Sagan won a Pulitzer Prize for his book *The Dragons of Eden: speculations on the evolution of human intelligence*. Other books include *Broca's Brain* (1979), *Comet* (1986) and *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1993), these last two with his third wife, Ann Druyan, as co-author. He also wrote a novel, *Contact* (1985). However, to the general public he will be best-remembered for *Cosmos* (1980), an ambitious book and 13-part television series on astronomy which highlighted the efforts of those people throughout history who have tried to make sense of the universe. It is estimated that the series has been seen by almost 10 per cent of the world's population and it justifiably earned Sagan many accolades and awards.

Sagan made frequent television appearances and with his slow, deliberate voice of reason, he became an articulate spokesman for astronomy and science, often espousing the cause of rational scientific argument and debate in the face of a tide of pseudo-science and superstition. He returned to this theme in his final book, *Demon Haunted World* (1996). He believed that all scientists should be capable of describing their work in terms that were understandable to the general public and furthermore that they had a duty to do so.

Ironically, something he had in common with many professional scientists who undertake to make complex concepts more accessible to the public, his ability to popularise his own subject led some astronomers to doubt his credentials as a working scientist. However, even though the publicity resulting from *Cosmos* made it difficult for him to return to his normal duties at Cornell, he continued to produce important contributions to planetary science on a wide range of subjects.

One of his most influential papers (with Richard Turco, Owen Toon, Thomas Ackerman and James Pollack – the Ttaps group) introduced the concept of nuclear winter, whereby the fires resulting from a thermonuclear war would inject fine smoke particles into the Earth's atmosphere, trigger a global ice age and cause the collapse of agriculture; there could be no winners of such a war. With supporting evidence from the dust forms on Mars and the subsequent verification of the concept using computer models, Sagan speculated that perhaps the prospect of nuclear winter had played a constructive role in convincing nations of the futility of nuclear war.

Sagan was fond of pointing out that we are living at a unique point in our history when, in the course of a few generations, humans have taken the first steps beyond their home planet to explore the solar system. He delighted in the fact that he was alive at this exciting time and he drew parallels with a previous age of discovery in the 15th and 16th centuries. The title of his penultimate book, *Pale Blue Dot* (1994), refers to the insignificant appearance of Earth as viewed from deep interplanetary space; in it he looked forward to an era when future generations will have escaped self-destruction and natural catastrophes to move beyond the confines of Earth. He finished the book with these words:

> They will gaze up and strain to find the blue dot in their skies. They will love it no less for its obscurity and fragility. They will marvel at how vulnerable the repository of all our potential once was, how perilous our infancy, how humble our beginnings, how many rivers we had to cross before we found our way.

If we do manage to find our way, it will be thanks to the efforts of Carl Sagan. The inhabitants of the blue dot mourn his departure.

Carl Murray

Carl Sagan, astronomer and writer: born Brooklyn, New York 9 November 1934; David Duncan Professor of Astronomy and Space Science, Cornell University 1976-96; married first Lynn Margulis, second Linda Salzman (three sons), third 1981 Ann Druyan (one son, one daughter); died Seattle 20 December 1996.

Konrad Fischer

Konrad Fischer was one of the most innovative and influential art dealers of his generation.

Born in Düsseldorf in 1939, he attended the Düsseldorf Art Academy from 1958 to 1962. In 1963, exhibiting under his mother's maiden name of Lueg, he collaborated with his fellow students Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter to found a new movement, "Capitalist Realism", a European strain of Pop Art and an ironic reflection of the material world of the nascent German economic miracle.

Polke and Richter went on to develop international reputations as conceptual painters; Fischer, with his feeling for art and artists, became no less influential, but as an agent for artists. It was the legendary dealer and representative of Joseph Beuys, Alfred Schmela, who having shown Lueg's work in 1963 encouraged him to start a second gallery for young people.

This joint project did not work out, but in 1967 Fischer developed his own concept for a gallery. His idea was startling in its simplicity but established a completely new approach to exhibiting contemporary art, not only in other galleries, but also in exhibition halls and museums across Europe and eventually America.

Carl Andre, the first artist to show at Konrad Fischer's gallery, in October 1967, has written of the experience:

> Konrad did not have enough money to pay for the shipping and insurance of any art work so he sent me the cheapest New York/Düsseldorf Lufthansa ticket. [He also] did not have enough money to rent a proper gallery space so he took a disused alley that ran like a tunnel through a tenement block in the Altstadt, blocked both ends with glass doors, and wired fluorescent lights from end to end overhead. When I arrived he handed me a brush and a can of paint and said "Carl, the sooner you paint the floor, the sooner you can install your work."

Andre tore up the plans that he had made in New York and proceeded to make a new work devised specially for the scale and configuration of Fischer's gallery. This principle of moving the artist, rather than the work of art, reflected a contemporary interest in concept as much as object and was soon widely adopted as a model, as was Fischer's custom of announcing his exhibitions by means of a simple postcard.

Fischer followed Andre's exhibition with the first European exhibitions for the Americans Richard Artschwager, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman and Robert Ryman, and the first one-person exhibitions anywhere for Hanne Darboven, On Kawara and the British artists Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Bruce McLean and Gilbert and George.

Within the space of two years Fischer's gallery became one of the two or three most important places to see new developments in contemporary art. It provided a forcing ground for the artists and the ideas that dominated the avant-garde agenda and the international exhibitions of the period, including "When Attitudes Become Form" in Bern in 1968, the annual s eries of "Prospect" exhibitions held in Düsseldorf from 1968 and culminating in Harald Szeeman's "Documenta 5" at Kassel in 1972.

In the 1970s Fischer became the most influential figure in a group of European galleries that included Wide White Space in Antwerp, Art and Project in Amsterdam, Heiner Friedrich in Munich and the Lisson Gallery in London, continuing to show minimal and conceptual art and the work of the Italian Arte Povera artists such as Mario Merz and Jannis Kounellis. But his influence grew from his close association with artists and the significance of the particular exhibitions that they made in his gallery rather than through his success as a merchant.

Fischer's primary goal was not to act as a salesman but, as he put it, "to keep the family informed". Andre's account discloses Fischer's instinctive sympathy for the mind and the strategy of the artist. This was repaid by the loyalty which artists displayed when they came under pressure to show in more successful commercial galleries in the late Seventies and early Eighties.

Time and again artists would reserve their best work or efforts for a show at Fischer's, from where the work would be bought by discerning collectors or other dealers who would subsequently present it in their own "general stores", as Fischer described those commercial galleries with no sense of dedication to a group or a generation. In the mid-Eighties Fischer renewed his commitment to the principle of working with emerging artists, embracing and promoting a younger generation of sculptors, including Schütte, Mucha, and Klingelhöller from Dusseldorf, as well as Tony Cragg and Juan Munoz.

For 30 years Fischer was a presence at every important exhibition opening in the European art world. Understated and relaxed in contrast to his eager competitors, he could be seen in the bar in the company of artists or a small group of discriminating collectors from Belgium, Holland and the Rheinland rather than drinking champagne with the international collectors who emerged in the Eighties and Nineties.

Konrad Fischer was shrewd and self-deprecating with an ironic sense of humour. He had a special relationship with British art and regularly showed the work of Hamish Fulton and Alan Charlton as well as Richard Long, Gilbert and George and Tony Cragg. Dorothee, his wife and then his working partner for nearly 30 years, continues to run the gallery in Düsseldorf, a role which became even more significant as Fischer fought the cancer which brought his early death.

Nicholas Serota

Fischer: uncompromising

If art dealers have always been fascinating, that delicious combination of large sums of money and larger cultural erudition, in the 20th century they are nigh totemic figures, **writes Adrian Dannatt**. The more hermetic or enigmatic art becomes the more crucial the gallerist.

Konrad Fischer was the ideal modern dealer, absolutely uncompromising in his tastes, completely committed to actual art rather than anecdotal pseudo-biography or associative glamour, and just as importantly, awfully good at selling. With his gallery in Düsseldorf for nearly 30 years, Fischer was amongst the handful of figures who made post-war Germany a universally envied haven for contemporary art, responsible for a generation of enlightened collectors, generous museums and local *Kunsthalles*.

Konrad Fischer made you feel you should stick to your guns and carry on with what you wanted to do: it wasn't about money, it was about art. Fischer was totally independent, totally about the art. He focused on the art and the artists and couldn't give a rat's ass about the public.

Konrad Fischer, artist and art dealer: born Düsseldorf 1939; married 1964 Dorothee Franke; died Düsseldorf 24 November 1996.

Raphael Samuel

Gareth Stedman Jones's obituary of Raphael Samuel [11 December] captures well his energy, passion and commitment, **writes Keith Flett**. He is less clear about the political trajectory of Samuel's history.

While Samuel was a youthful member of the Communist Party Historians Group before 1956 his history was very much a product of the new left and the events of 1968 in particular. He was arguably the moving force behind history from below in Britain – the attempt to capture the history of the lives of ordinary working people and their political movements.

He never gave up or became disillusioned, but he did move from socialist history, through history from below to people's history. He saw people's history, primarily of culture, cultural objects and artefacts, as being a genuinely democratic history open to all. Undeniably true in one sense, in another it sometimes lacked a cutting edge. I remember once, at the Bishopsgate Institute, coming across Raphael studying intently *The British Book of Hit Pop Singles*. The products of such researches made brilliant journalism, but not always satisfactory history.

Even so socialist history will be much the poorer without Raphael Samuel.

Brigadier Robert Daniell

The obituary of Brigadier Robert Daniell [by William de Segundo, 19 December] contains four references to Rommel's operating Mark VI tanks in North Africa between April and June 1942, **writes David Bartlett**.

The Panzer Mark VI Ausf.E (Tiger I) first appeared on the battlefield in the Leningrad area in August 1942 and did not arrive in Tunisia until later in the year. The tanks referred to are more likely to have been the up-gunned Panzer Mark IV Ausf.F2 and Ausf.G (known to the British as Mark IV specials). These tanks were fitted with the long-barrelled 7.5cm KwK L/43 and were available from March 1942 and May 1942 respectively.

It was also reported that Daniell's 8cwt truck had its wheels blown away by an 88mm machine gun. The 7.92mm machine gun was the largest calibre in use by the Afrika Korps: the 88mm is the calibre of the main gun on the Tiger tank and the highly effective anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

KRIKMAN: To Julia and Yuval, a daughter, Naomi Beatrice, on 16 December 1996.

THIMONT JACK: On 23 October, to Ann Thimont and Stephen Jack, a daughter, Isobel Katherine, a sister for Helen and Madeleine.

DEATHS

HILL: Professor Dame Elizabeth died 17 December, aged 96. Funeral service on 31 December, 10am, at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Ennismore Gardens, London SW7. Interment at Granchester Church at 2pm

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, Forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at **Horse Guards**, 11am. **TOMORROW:** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at **Horse Guards**, 10am. 1st Battalion the Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard at **Buckingham Palace**, 11.30am. band provided by the Grenadier Guards.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Alexander Bennett, former chairman, Whitbread and Co, 83; Air Commandant Dame Jean Bromet, former Director, WRAF, 84; Mr Basil Collins, former chairman, Nabisco, 73; Mrs Chris Evert-Lloyd, tennis champion, 42; Miss Jane Fonda, actress, 59; Sir James Hill MP, 70; Mr Peter Johnson, Headmaster, Wrekin College, 49; Sir Frederick Lawton, former Appeal Court judge, 85; Mr Albert Lee, rock guitarist, 53; Mr Geoff Lewis, horse-racing trainer, 61; Mr Wyndham Milligan, former Principal, Wolsey Hall, Oxford, 89; Sir John Nabarro, consultant physician, 81; Mr Steve Perryman, footballer, 45; Mr Anthony Powell, novelist, 91; Mr John Quayle, actor, 58; Sir John Quinton, former chairman, Barclays Bank, 67; Flt Lt William Reid VC, 75; Mr Thomas Robinson, former president, DRG, 84; Brigadier Vera Rooke, former director, Army Nursing Services, 72; Mr Walter Spanghero, rugby player, 53; Mr Greville Starkey, former jockey, 57; Mr Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor, 52; Mr Peter Tinniswood, playwright, 60; Mr Cyril Townsend MP, 59; Mr Doug Walters, cricketer, 51; Mr Alan Williams MP, 51; Mr Carl Wilson, rock guitarist, 50; Professor Robert Worcester, chairman, Market & Opinion Research International, 63.

TOMORROW: Air Chief Marshal Sir John Aiken, 75; Lady Archer of Weston-super-Mare, scientist, 52; Sir Douglas Brown, High Court judge, 65; Mr Robin Corbett MP, 63; Viscount Davidson, former government whip, 68; Mr Noel Edmonds, television presenter, 48; Mr Maurice Gibb, singer, of the Bee Gees, 47; Mr Robin Gibb, singer, of the Bee Gees, 47; Miss Patricia Hayes, actress, 87; Mrs Karin Jonzen, sculptor, 82; Dr Judith McClure, Headmistress, St George's School, Edinburgh, 51; Sir Trefor Morris, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 62; Mr Chris Old, former England cricketer, 48; The Rev Lord Sandford, former government minister, 76; Lord Stott, former Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 87; The Duke of Westminster, Chancellor, Manchester Metropolitan University, 45; Mr Ken Whitmore, playwright, 57; Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, journalist, 73.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1118; Masaccio (Tommaso di Giovanni), painter, 1401; Jean Racine, playwright, 1639; Benjamin Disraeli, first Earl of Beaconsfield, writer and statesman, 1804; Josef Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili (Joseph Stalin), Soviet leader, 1879; Frank Hampson, creator of "Dan Dare", 1918. **Deaths:** Giovanni Boccaccio, author, 1375; Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, novelist, 1940; General George Smith Patton, military leader, 1945; Lion Feuchtwanger, novelist and playwright, 1958; Sir (Jack) John Berry Hobbs, cricketer, 1963. **On this day:** the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth Rock in North America, 1620; anaesthetics were used for the first time in Britain, 1846; *Charley's Aunt* was first performed, 1892; the Port of London Authority was inaugurated, 1908; the first crossword puzzle in a newspaper was published, by the *New York World* 1913; General Charles de Gaulle was elected president of the French Fifth Republic, 1958; the first flight of Man around the moon took place when *Apollo 8* was launched, 1968. **Today** is the Feast Day of St Anastasius II of Antioch, St Glycerius, St John Vincent, St Peter Canisius and Saints Themistocles and Dioscorus.

TOMORROW: Births: Jean-Henri Fabre, naturalist, 1823; Charles Stuart Calverley, poet and parodist, 1831; William Hale White ("Mark Rutherford"), novelist, 1831; John Nevil Maskelyne, stage magician, 1839; Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini, composer, 1858; Edwin Arlington Robinson, poet, 1869; Edgard (Edgar Victor Achille-Charles) Varèse, composer, 1883; Alan Dudley Bush, composer, conductor and pianist, 1900. **Deaths:** Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Guercino), painter, 1666; George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), novelist, 1880; Nathanael West (Nathan Wallenstein Weinstein), novelist, 1940; Helen Beatrix Potter, author and artist, 1943; Richard Frederick Dimbleby, broadcaster, 1965; David Penhaligon MP, killed in a car accident 1986; Lord (Ted) Willis, playwright, politician and author, 1992. **On this day:** James Stuart, the Old Pretender, landed at Peterhead, 1715; the first pantomime in England was staged, 1716; the Ministry of Pensions was first set up, 1916; Southern Rhodesia left the Commonwealth, 1966; Kurt Waldheim was elected UN Secretary-General, 1971; a Pan American jumbo jet crashed on Lockerbie in Scotland, killing all 259 passengers and crew, and 11 people on the ground, 1988. **Tomorrow** is the Feast Day of St Chaeremon and Others, St Flavian of Tuscany, St Ischyrion and St Zeno.

Lectures

TODAY

National Gallery: Richard Stemp, "Christmas (iii): Pittoni, *The Nativity with God the Father and the Holy Ghost*", 12pm.

Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Tangram-inspired Flights of Fancy", 1pm.

British Museum: Penny Wallis, "The Nativity in Medieval Art", 1.15pm.

TOMORROW

Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Art amongst the Christmas Baubles", 2.30pm.

Why I won't celebrate Christmas

faith & reason

Daphne Hampson, author of *After Christianity* and Senior Lecturer in Divinity at St Andrews University, explains why she will not be joining in the festivities next week.

I attend a Christmas party. A choir of cherub-faced undergraduates sing of a virgin and her baby boy. I am embarrassed, ill at ease. They invite requests. A woman – whose company I have been enjoying – calls out: "The Holly wears the Crown", correcting herself to "The Holly and the Ivy". *Sotto voce* another woman says "nice pagan carol!" Overhearing the exchange, a most senior (male) member of the university, a scholar of the pagan ancient world, twinkles. I absorb the scene.

The Christmas story of course lacks any basis. In his customary zest to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the author of Matthew's Gospel cites Isaiah 7. But while the Greek Old Testament, in a mistranslation, says "virgin", the original Hebrew has no such connotation.

This is not a harmless myth. Young children will, this Christmas again, enact nativity scenes. There are shepherds, wise men, an innkeeper, a father. Only one woman is present, and she *qua* mother. Each year a baby boy is born. An Anglican priest tells me his eight-year-old daughter enquired: "Daddy, did God have a daughter?"

The male myth forms the lynchpin of a complex sexual symbolism, in which the female represents the secondary, subordinate term. Thus Mary, who represents humanity, is "female" in relation to a "male" God. Likewise the Church, or the people of Israel (who sin and go astray), is cast as "female". Letting Mary stand for humanity, the Protestant Karl Barth speaks of "this non-willing, non-achieving, non-creative, non-sovereign, merely ready, merely receptive, virgin human being".

Indeed, the Christmas story exaggerates God's "maleness". The Catholic theologian Michael Schmaus writes: "What is otherwise achieved through the action of a male, was done to Mary by God's omnipotence." God and Mary become a fertile couple, who conceive a child long-distance. Mary is humble – and obedient. It is a male father-son genealogy, in which woman forms the necessary intermediary.

Doubtless it comforts men. God is father, while the mother is wholly present for the boy child, the actual father off the scene. In Christian symbolism woman is never portrayed as the equal of man. You don't see Mary with her mouth open, talking or laughing, a sexual being who desires her husband.

It may well be that, in his religion, man explores what he names his "feminine" side. In his imagination he regains the mother; or else attains to a mystical oneness with the "father", now endowed with nurturing qualities. He may even cast himself as "female" in relation to this God. But such moves scarcely aid women!

Nor is a wholly male Protestantism necessarily an improvement over such Catholic symbolism. A religion of brothers simply excludes sexual diversity. Why should women wish to join sons who, through the Son, find reconciliation with the Father? Why was reconciliation needed? Why indeed was God ever absent, requiring incarnation?

In rejecting this myth women have not necessarily become atheists. On what had my new-found friend at the party been discoursing? The banal materialism of the American mid-West society from which she came. Most women I admire and treasure have about them a marked spirituality. Some of us indeed hold more explicitly religious beliefs, myself included. It seems to be the case that prayer is powerful, that quiet, loving concentration on another brings about miracles. When others think of us our lives are changed and healed.

Christmas equals many things. How badly – in our frantic lives – we need to "centre" ourselves again. We reknit human relationships, rekindle life. If "God" is love, joy and peace, our blighted world could do with that! The Christians, wanting to reverse a paganism in which the oak symbolised winter, the holly summer, crowned the holly. We should not desire to go back behind Christianity, nor can we. Nevertheless with Christian symbolism Western culture has been skewed. There is much to unravel.

Holly trees – I learn at that party – come male and female: to be fruitful they need one another. Could it be that women long for men to leave their myth behind in a new and equal future?

• After Christianity *is published by SCM Press, £10.95*

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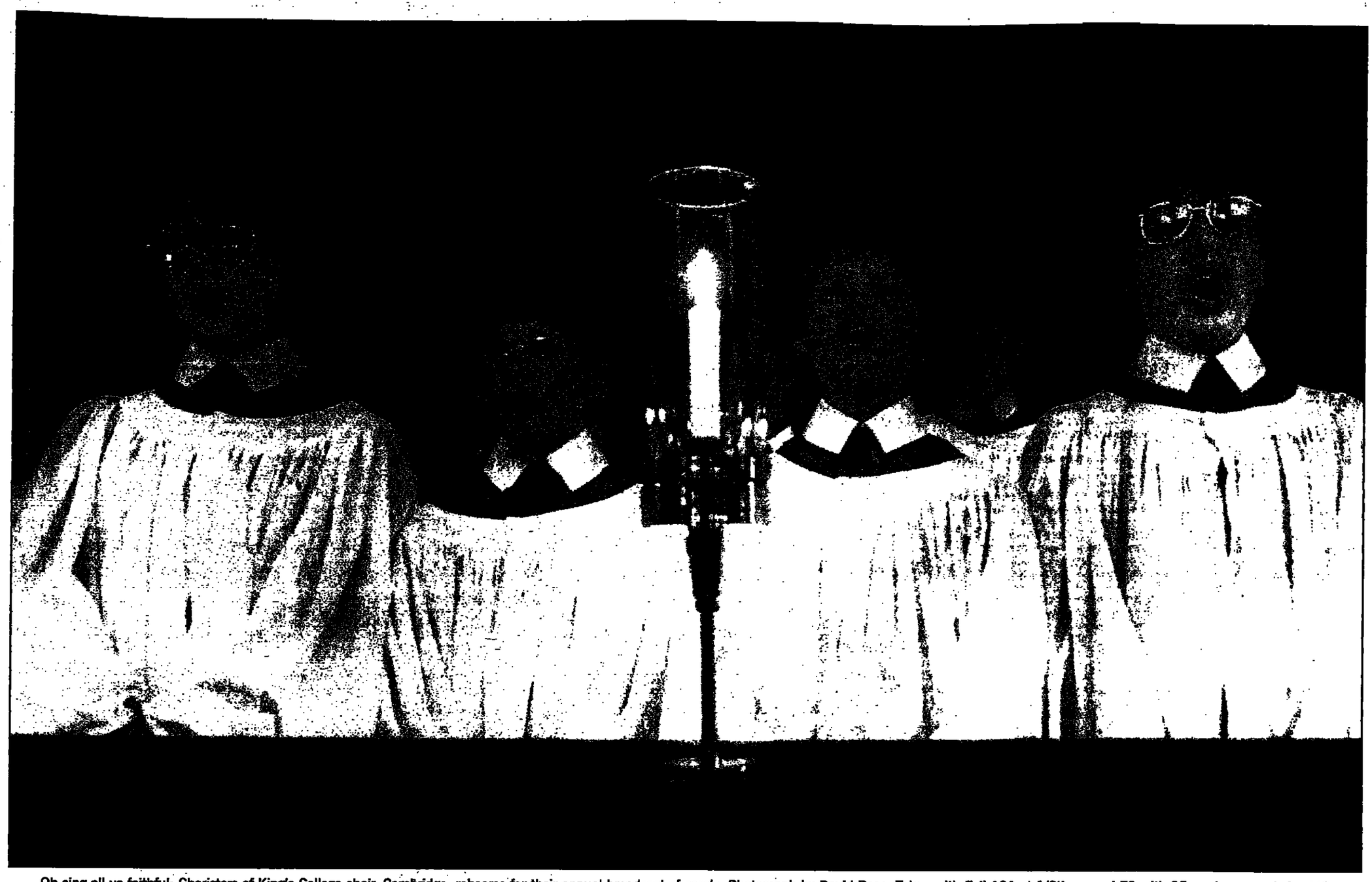

Oh sing all ye faithful: Choristers of King's College choir, Cambridge, rehearse for their annual broadcast of carols. Photograph by David Rose. Taken with Fuji ASA at 1/8th second F2 with 35mm lens on a Leica M6

thelongweekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 21 DECEMBER 1996

Few events conjure up the spirit of Christmas more poignantly than the festival of carols performed by the choir of King's College, Cambridge. Nothing captures that event more movingly than the still, small, voice of the soloist who leads with 'Once in Royal David's City'. Still, small, voices are in short supply in the holiday hurly-burly. You could escape it all skiing across the empty wastes of Lapland but if you have to join the fray, check our last-minute gift list. And if you're feeling extrovert, put on one of these daft Santas and let Christmas go to your head

interview

John Walsh meets... Posy Simmonds

So precise and neat, the cartoonist and social satirist of the Eighties is also sophisticated and sexy **page 3**

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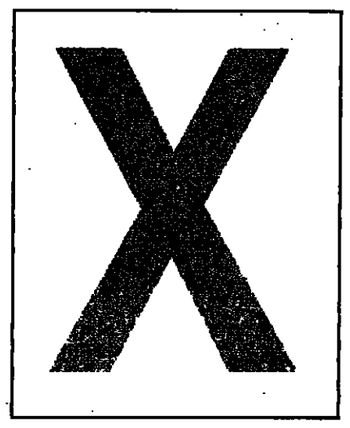
arts & books



X marks the plot. Or does it?

Why it is the letter which signals both a sense of aching desire and one of howling panic **page 4**

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The tears of a Scrooge on skis

Cold, gloomy, dark, but Steve Wood found winter in Lapland awesome and utterly moving **page 7**

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Don't panic! Try treats for under a tenner

Be chic on the cheap. Buy last-minute pressies. Try Louise Levene's last ditch face-savers **page 16**

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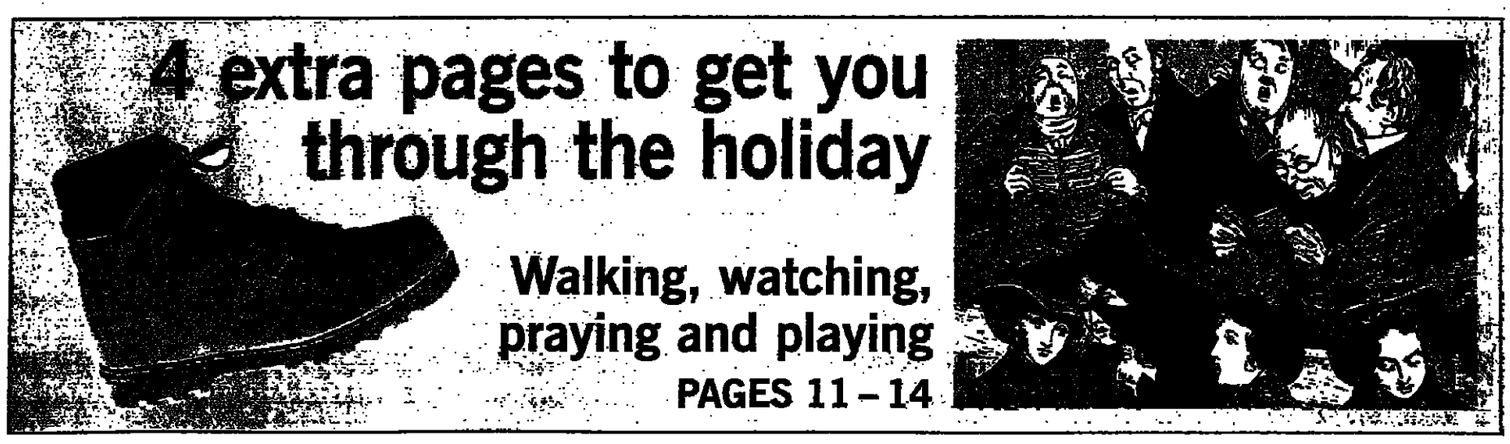


A millennium of ninety-sixes

With the help of Joseph Strutt's 'Sports and Pastimes of the People of England', William Hartston summons up the games of Christmas past

"It is said of the English," Strutt reports in his book of 1876, "that formerly they were remarkable for the manner in which they celebrated the festival of Christmas; at which season they admitted variety of sports and pastimes not known, or little practised, in other countries."

In the royal court, a "lord of misrule" was appointed over the Christmas period, who job was to supervise the general merriment and provide games and amusements to keep everyone jolly.

Both Lincoln's Inn and the city of Norwich used to appoint a King of Christmas to supervise the revels, while the universities of Oxford and Cambridge would elect a "King of the Bean" by baking a single bean into a cake, and seeing who had the lucky slice.

The games that follow, all taken from Strutt's book, are not specifically Christmassy, but may well have been played in the eras referred to.

Christmas 1196:
"The subjoined engraving represents two boys seated upon a form by the side of a water-tub; both of them with their hands fixed below their knees, and one bending backwards in the same position, intending, I presume, to touch the water without emerging his head or falling into it, and afterwards to recover his position." Strutt has no idea what the second boy does. He conjectures it's the same as the other boy. "If it be necessary for him who stoops to take anything out of the water, the pastime will bear some analogy to the diving for apples represented on a previous page."

For a modern version of this game, without the danger of getting wet, try this: First, kneel on the ground. Then place one elbow on the ground, touching the corresponding knee. Extend the forearm until it is as far as possible in front of you, without breaking contact between elbow and knee. Have a friend place a matchbox upright at the point your middle finger reached. (Or push it there yourself, while extending the arm.) Now without shifting your kneeling posture, clasp your hands behind your back. Finally, lean forwards and try to pick up the matchbox with your mouth. This, in the present writer's experience, is one of the most reliable ways to tell whether someone is male or female. Women can do it; men topple over. It's something to do with centres of gravity and bone lengths.

Christmas 1296:
"Cross and pile is a silly pastime well enough known among the lowest and most vulgar classes of the community, and to whom it is at present very properly confined; formerly, however, it held a higher rank, and was introduced at the court. Edward II was partial to this and such like frivolous diversions, and spent much of his time in pursuit of them.

A halfpenny is generally now used in playing this game, but any other coin with a head impressed on one side will answer the purpose: the reverse of the head being called the tail without respect to the figure upon it. Anciently the English coins were stamped on one side with a cross. One person tosses the halfpenny up and the other calls at pleasure head or tail; if his call lies uppermost when the halfpenny descends and rests upon the ground, he wins; and if on the contrary, of course he loses."

Christmas 1396:
"A man seated holds up one of his feet, opposed to the foot of another man, who standing upon one leg endeavours to thrust him backwards." In another variant given by Strutt, the hopping man is replaced by one seated in a swing and swung towards the other: "... the man of course descended with great force, and striking the foot of his antagonist with much violence, no doubt very frequently overthrew him."

Christmas 1396:
Cayles, Closh and Loggats are all predecessors of ninepins. Cayles was played with a bat, ball and various numbers of pins, which the batsman tried to knock over with his stroke of the ball. Closh was similar, only with the ball thrown directly at the pins, and Loggats was another version, using bones instead of pins. Whence Hamlet's: "Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with them?" Loggats was made illegal by Henry VIII.

Christmas 1496:
"Hot Cockles, from the French *hautes coquilles*, is a play in which one kneels, and covering his eyes lays his head in another's lap and guesses who struck him." The game is mentioned by John Gay, who wrote:

As at Hot Cockles once I laid me down/And felt the weighty hand of many a clown,/Buxoma gave a gentle tap, and I/Quick rose, and read soft mischief in her eye.

Strutt points out that Hot Cockles is not at all the same as the ancient Greek game of Chytrinda, which "is similar to another equally well known to us, and called frog in the middle".

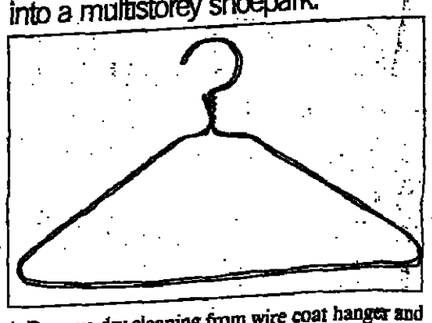
"A single player, called χοτρα, kotra, and with us the frog, being seated upon the ground, was surrounded by his comrades, who pulled and buffeted him until he could catch one of them; which done, the person caught took his place, and was buffeted in like manner."

None of the above is available on CD-Rom.

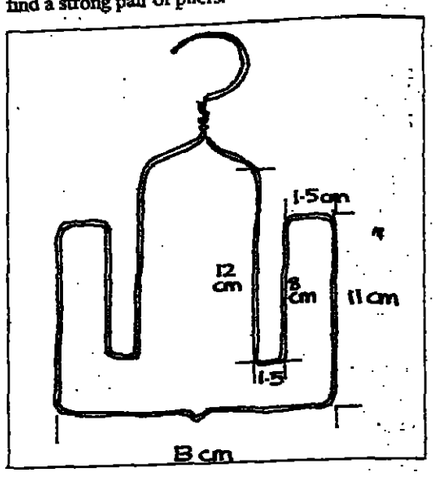
The joy of junk: discarded metal coat hangers become a multistorey shoepark

Don't junk it ... use it!

How to turn your wire coathangers into a multistorey shoepark.



1. Remove dry cleaning from wire coat hanger and find a strong pair of pliers.



2. Bend as shown. Repeat with more coat hangers for a multistorey model, hanging each to the previous one on the notch at the bottom middle.

Bawn O'Beirne-Ranelagh

Games people play

Pandora Melly discovers the games Father Christmas gets up to, off duty

Derek Ware – Santa and Stunt Man

Being Father Christmas isn't what it used to be; it's all become very politically correct. You're not allowed to lift a child on to your lap; it has to climb there, and if it wets itself, you're not supposed to say anything; you just have to use the next child as a mopper-up.

Out of season, I teach Stage Combat leading to a Fight Proficiency Certificate. Funnily enough, having done all the stunts, I'm not very competitive. To tell the truth, if someone says they can run faster, or jump higher, or are better endowed than me, I say, "Good on yer, mate."

When I was little, I used to play at being the US Cavalry. The criteria for joining in was to have a pair of yellow braces. Do you remember the John Ford movies? Everyone kept their trousers up with braces then. It also meant you didn't have to play with girls.

In the war years, all boys secretly wanted to be Germans. They had better uniforms: boots you could tuck your trousers into, and wonderful helmets. That thing that looked like a chamber pot was the Kavlar, based on a gladiator's lid.

My best game is Custer's Last Stand. I rework it accurately, right up to the point where Custer attempted to hit the village on the ford. I've got a home-made US Cavalry uniform, but without yellow stripes down the trousers; there weren't any. Those on campaign just reinforced their pants with canvas. And I don't believe there was a last stand; Custer probably died in a field dressing station. I have twice been to the battlefield, which is in Montana. The last time I was there, a tall Red Indian said to me: "My name is Vince Playbird, and I *own* Medicine Tail Coulee."

The best games are always played on your own in your imagination. Pretending baddies was my big game. I was very good at dying. I had this one friend who'd say: "Yer not going to die are yer?" My death scene went on for about five minutes; I'm still playing in the twilight of my years.

Yellow felt braces (£32, to fit all) from Hawes & Curtis, 23 Jermyn St, SW1.

Chess William Hartston

Hugh Alexander, the strongest British player in the Forties and Fifties, once lost to Mikhail Botvinnik through a common strategic error. In a King's Indian Defence type of position, with Black pawns at d6 and e5 against White pawns on c4, d5 and e4, Alexander advanced his f-pawn to f5, and met exf5 with Bxf5. After the game, Botvinnik commented that "every Russian schoolboy" knows you must recapture with gxf5 in such positions. The point is to keep Black's pawns mobile on e5 and f5. When a bishop or knight recaptures on f5 it is an invitation for a white piece to take up residence on e4, and to soften Black up on the b1 to h7 diagonal with such moves as Bd3, Qc2 and even g3, h4 and h5.

Even Russian ex-schoolboys, however, sometimes think they can break strategic rules. In this game from the Last Palmas tournament, we see Vladimir Kramnik drifting into just the sort of mess that cost Alexander his game against Botvinnik nearly 40 years ago. Admittedly his pawn was already on g5 by the time he played f5, so gxf5 was impossible. Also, Black judged that his own counterplay with h5, Bh6 and g4 would be enough to distract White from utilising the e4 square effectively.

He was proven wrong by some excellent play by Veselin Topalov. The draught on the b1-h7 diagonal eventually proved fatal.

White: Topalov Black: Kramnik Las Palmas 1996
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 Be3 c6 8 d5 Ng4 9 Bg5 f6 10 Bh4 c5 11 0-0 Nh6 12 Ne1 Nd7 13 Rb1 b6 14 a3 g5 15 Bg3 f5 16 exf5 Nxf5 17 Ne4 h6 18 Nc2 Nf6 19 Bd3 Qe8 20 Ne3 Nxe4 21 Bxe4 h5 22 Qd3 Qf7 23 f3 Nxe3 24 Qxe3 Bh6 25 Be1 Qg7 26 Bd2 Rf6 27 Qd3 g4 28 Bxh6 Qxh6 29 fxg4 Bxg4 30 Rxf6 Qxf6 31 Rf1 Qg7 32 h3 Bd7 33 Qf3 Be8 34 Qf5 Qf7 35 Qg5+ Qg7 36 Qh4 Qh6 37 Rf6 Qe3+ 38 Kh2 Kg7 39 Rf3 resigns.

Whatever happened to ... The traditional Christmas?

Origins Three wise men come from the East bearing gifts for a newborn child. Angels proclaim peace and goodwill to all men, etc.

Christmas Carriages pulled by horses pass through snow-bound streets. Shop windows glow bright in the darkness, and bulge with gifts. Churches welcome their flock. Families celebrate together.

The reality Family togetherness? The Royal Family lead the way – as in Victorian times. They appeared as a unit then and now they're mostly divorced. Like one in four families in the rest of the country. Gifts? People interpret the Christian message aspect of "giving" in a very generous but also strangely literal way, spending £20bn a year. But, even stranger, don't go to the buildings to get the message first hand. Church? A tiny proportion attends – 1.4 million. Though that's still considerably larger than at any other time of the year. Anyway, half the religious population of the UK are non-Christians. Which presumably means they don't celebrate Christmas; or have Christian names, then? Horses and carriages? Well I haven't hailed one recently. Christmas is booming, but it has nothing to do with snow-filled streets (especially snow). Or Christ.

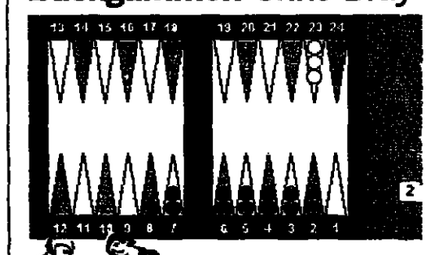
The reason Consumer myths are superior to Christian ones. Father Christmas is based on Coca Cola's colours, designed by an American artist in an ad campaign in 1931. This is itself based on the church's Santa; a bishop called St Nicholas. He saved three boys murdered by an innkeeper; a remarkable achievement. An even greater one when you consider that the boys had been cut up, salted and sold in a tub as meat for pies. Not surprisingly, the Coca Cola version is better known.

Also The Christian myths themselves are pretty shaky. We're in fact celebrating a pagan festival. Pope Julius I in the fourth century *allocated* 25 December as the date of Christ's birth. By an amazing coincidence this happened also to be a high point in the pagan mid-winter festival. And was fortunate, because he wished to stamp out paganism and convert the peoples of Europe to Christ. If we follow the star of Bethlehem, Christmas is somewhere in June in the year 2BC, when recent research has shown that "star" to have been the confluence of Jupiter and Venus. Which should alter the way we look at the festival. As well as the odds on a white Christmas.

So to sum up, we're celebrating an event on the wrong date, with the wrong traditions, for the wrong reasons. On the one hand a baking hot Middle Eastern landscape, and on the other a freezing Arctic. If St Nicholas, a bishop in Myra, Turkey, had worn the Coca-Cola Santa get-up he would have dropped dead from heat exhaustion. The traditional Christmas? It's not the real thing.

James Aufenast

Backgammon Chris Bray



One of the exciting features of backgammon is the uncertainty of the outcome, even in positions which at first sight seem to be foregone conclusions. Look at the above position with White on roll:

Believe it or not there is still a lot of play. Of course, if White rolls a double (other than 1-1) he will win a backgammon. If he rolls two numbers that don't contain a 1 then Black can hit the remaining man with any 1 of his own. He should then be able to close out the single man and save the gammon. In fact he will win the position 7 per cent of the time.

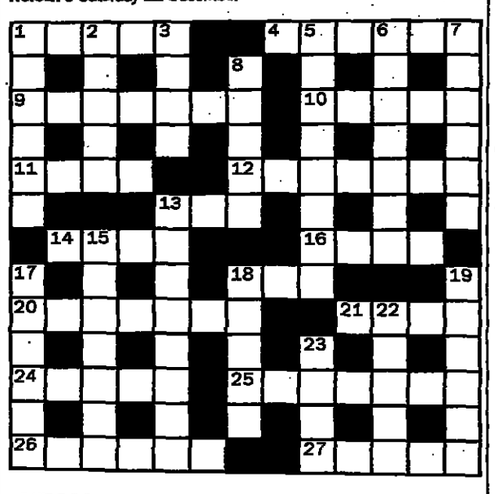
The really interesting variation comes when White rolls a number containing a 1, as he will then have to leave two blots on his one and two points and Black will have a man on the bar. This position is known as the *Coup Classique*. Should Black then roll a 1 or a 2 then the game is far from over.

The correct technique here is far from simple. If Black starts by hitting with a 1 then he should hope to roll another 1 to hit White's other blot. If he starts by rolling a 2 it is more complex. He should build his prime from the outside, for example, with a 6 he should play 14/8 and not 8/2. This enables the man on the 2-point to be hit when White re-enters and thus gives Black another chance to pick up White's second blot by hitting from the bar. Once Black has hit both of White's men then he must close them out. To do this he must play as aggressively as possible, never giving White the chance to make an anchor.

If Black closes out both of White's blots then he becomes a 65 per cent favourite to win. He should not redouble, however, until he has taken off three men. There is something innately satisfying in bringing off the *Coup*. Being on the wrong side of it can do serious damage to your psychological health!

concise crossword

No.3176 Saturday 21 December



ACROSS
1 Public (5)
4 Sore (6)
9 Reading desk (7)
10 Silly (5)
11 Not valid (4)
12 Reviewers (7)
13 Writing fluid (3)
14 Metallic element (4)
16 Italian river (4)
18 Unwell (3)
20 Birds (7)
21 Aid (4)
24 Type of seaweed (5)
25 Mythical beast (7)
26 Cooks in oven (6)
27 Cuban dance (5)

DOWN
1 Rectangular (6)
2 Be pre-eminent (5)
3 Digits (4)
5 Lawbreaker (8)
6 European language (7)
7 Lubricate (6)
8 Light meal (5)
13 Lazy (8)
15 Crown jewels (7)
17 Arachnid (6)
18 Matter (5)
19 Verse (6)
22 Long-handled brush (5)
23 Seaside feature (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 7 Missed, 8 Rusted (Mistrusted), 10 Related, 11 Cacti, 12 Vote, 13 Fleet, 17 Thief, 18 Loom, 22 Lawns, 23 Sardine, 24 Bisect, 25 Hawaii. DOWN: 1 Improve, 2 Isolate, 3 Delta, 4 Quicken, 5 Stick, 6 Admit, 9 Edelweiss, 14 Physics, 15 Holiday, 16 Amnesia, 19 Globe, 20 Twist, 21 Organ.

Bridge Alan Hiron

Love all; dealer South

North
♠Q 10 8 6 2
♡Q 9 6
◇Q 7 5
♣Q 5

West
♠K 3
♡A 8 4 2
◇4
♣K J 10 7 6 3

East
♠A J 9 7 4
♡K 3
◇K 8
♣A 9 8 4

South
♠5
♡J 10 7 5
◇A J 10 9 6 3 2
♣2

Ron Klinger's "50 More Winning Bridge Tips" (Gollancz, £5.99) contains much good practical advice. For example: "If your opening lead can be read as a singleton or a possible singleton, partner's card at trick one should be taken as a suit preference signal."

On today's deal, South opened 2◇ (weak), West overcalled with 3C and North raised to 3◇. East showed his spades and South – rather wildly – raised the barrage to 5◇. West doubled and all passed.

West led the ♠K and East followed with the nine. As they had obviously both read the winning tip, this was taken as suit preference to hearts and West switched to ♡2. East won with his king a returned a heart; West took his ace and played his lowest remaining heart, the four.

Again this was suit preference, this time for clubs and, after ruffing, East underled his ♣A to put West in again. A fourth round of hearts was trumped with East's king and that represented plus 800 points.

All very nice and the deal illustrated the point well, but I know that if I had collected 800 points in this fashion, my opponents at the other table would have bid the excellent club slam to score 920 points.

Not easy, I agree, especially if South had opened with a more challenging Three (or even Four) Diamonds instead o the rather feeble Two that he chose.

Perplexity

Mean cool beer scares crazier ghost

It may sound like a cure for the haunting effects of seasonal sobriety, but can you rearrange the letters in the above sentence to form the title of a book and the name of its principal character? A *Chambers Dictionary* prize will be awarded to the sender of the first correct answer opened on 2 January. Entries to: Perplexity, the *Independent*, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL.

7 December answers: Porcupine (price upon), Armadillo (Moral laid), Terrapin (Print ear). Winner: Catherine Barrett (Liverpool).

TURN TO PAGE 23... for the weather, sky at night, Jasper Rees on TV, Robert Hanks on radio and Kerber's Damon Hurts cartoon strip

هكذا من الأصل

Beauty in the detail

John Walsh meets... Posy Simmonds

If you're wondering what to buy Posy Simmonds for Christmas, let me help. She would simply love a new magnifying glass, one of the large, rectangular ones that she clamps to the side of her desk in order to see more clearly the tiny filigree bits, the curlicues and incidental details, the fingernails and cake crumbs and whiskers of her legendary cartoon characters. The lady herself is a kind of miniature – not that she's particularly small, but that she's an embodiment of tiny precision, of neatness and fastidious exactness. She talks with animation, but her voice gets smaller and smaller during her sentences and dwindles away before the end, as though mortified by its initial boldness. Her slender fingers twitch and twiddle in the air as if adjusting minute whiskers. She uses the word "weeny" to describe the "shoebox" in Holborn where she used to live before moving to the vast north London mansion she now inhabits with her husband, Richard Hollis. It features an enormous front door, like the main portal of Gormenghast, vast windows with black shutters, a spectacular knock-though living room full of Japanese prints, French portraits, expensive porcelain and ancient brocade upholstery, all of which looming antiquity and grandeur only makes this modern and demure woman seem even more *mignonne* than ever.

She is also exceptionally good company. At different times during our chat, she impersonated a hen, a field of sheep and a creaking door for me, told jokes, swore like a Harwich docker and wound up a clockwork ferret which chased a plastic ball under one of the empire Gothic armchairs. She would come across as the perfect aunt, were she not so beautiful.

We talked about Christmas shopping. "I find a lot of the shops are changing. Lots of the supposedly smart ones are suddenly all distressed concrete walls. Everything's got very stripped down, clothes included. Petticoats, for instance – they're all the same sludge colour. The colour of elephant's breath." She is equally scathing about the range of smells on offer in the cosmetic department: "Those terrible square blocks of soap which smell of tarmac and seaweed. Of course, Crabtree and Evelyn are still doing their damask roses, but mostly now it's all samphire and kelp. Liberty's has gone for samphire in a big way. Ten years ago, everyone was wearing Giorgio and everywhere smelt of jam. Now everything smells of *low tide*..."

We talked about the Muji shops that, with their minimal design and packaging, resemble a wholesale chemist's owned by a Tupperware fanatic. "I think it's a reaction against all the prettying up that used to go on, everything covered in little mob caps, the Laura Ashley things, the cottagey gingham. I think everyone's fed up with frills and – what are those things called? – *bullion fringes*, all that crapola. So now you get all this stark unbleached muslin instead, all these distressed walls."

It will come as no surprise to former readers of her *Guardian* cartoon strip that Posy Simmonds hasn't lost her beady eye for middle-class paraphernalia. From fish kettles to vasectomies, Wagner to Valpolicella, Nativity plays to Suzuki viola, she spots all the things, the names, the clothes and behavioural patterns that define a certain type of educated-but-nervous Middle England. For 10 years, 1977 to 1987, her strip appeared on the *Guardian*'s Woman's Page. The exploits of George Weber, the polytechnic lecturer forever wrestling with semiotic conundra among the unheeding suburbs, and his wife Wendy, droopy, moth-eaten but heroic nonetheless, drew a fanatically loyal readership. Posy fans read about the Weber's six children, from the streaming-nosed toddler, Benji, to the eldest daughter, Belinda, a kohl-drenched leather queen with unsuitably violent boyfriends. They warmed to Stanhope Wright, advertising man and chronic adulterer, to Edmund Heep, the bar-room vulgarian with his lexicon of euphemisms for visiting the lavatory; to Stanhope's piss-taking fat daughter Jocasta, to Edmund's sons' post-punk band, The Snotty Throttlers...

But she gave it up in 1987, reasoning that the days of the woolly, lentil-swilling liberal were as numbered as those of the woolly mammoth amid all the go-getting yuppiedom of the late Eighties. The Webers turned up in subsequent books (the last was *Mustn't Grumble* in 1993) but Posy Simmonds directed her talents more and more into writing children's books: *Fred* (in which two children discover that their dead cat used to be a legendary pop star), *Lulu and the Flying Babies* (the cherubs in a renaissance painting give a little girl a guided tour of the world of art), *The Chocolate Wedding* (an epic dream sequence about rescuing the sugar bride from the top of a wedding cake), *Matilda* (Hilaire Belloc's mendacious wolf-crier), *Bouncing Buffalo* (a junk shop comes to life) and *F-Freezing ABC* (a simple alphabestiary).

'F-Freezing ABC': a simple alphabestiary

Television viewers can catch up with Ms Simmonds's early work when Channel 4 screens *Famous Fred* on Christmas Eve. It's a very winning elaboration of her first book by the animator Joanna Quinn, with the voices of Lenny Henry as the feline rocker (in an outrageous Brummie accent) and Tom Courtenay doing his camp theatrical-dresser act as Kenneth the Guinea Pig (they initially approached Alan Bennett for the role). "The original story wasn't long enough for a television treatment," said Posy, "so there had to be a character who could explain about Fred's other life. I knew Kenneth would be right because he has these neat little fingers [she briefly wiggled her own] for sewing on Fred's sequins. I imagined him having a treadmill in his hutch, instead of a wheel. They're always *busy*, aren't they, guinea pigs?"

Posy's interest in getting a small rodent absolutely right is wholly characteristic. She is a perfectionist who admires the quality in other artists, whether they're screen animators ("I went to see them doing *Fred* over the summer. All these computer screens with just one tiny action, one *nanosecond* of film, being drawn with this minute detail. With my pencil and rubber, I felt quite Stone Age") to Nick Park, creator of Wallace and Gromit. "He's the first animator who's really done mouths properly, got the lips and teeth absolutely right. Maybe being three-dimensional helps."

You can see it pains her that the main audience for her books, namely children, display such limited imaginative horizons when they meet her. "Usually they want me to draw them things from Super Nintendo games," she says crossly. "Or they'll say, 'Did you do *Toy Story*?' – 'No' – 'Can you draw Buzz Lightyear?' – 'Sorry, no' – and they assume I'm hopeless." A familiar scenario, apparently, is the gushing parent who brings the mutinous child to meet Posy, proffers one of her books and says, "Look darling, this is the lady who did *The Chocolate Wedding*" – at which the child looks suspiciously at the book and, as though humouring a sad fantasist, asks kindly, "And which bit did you do?"

Little do they know. Behind the whispering sophisticate lurks a woman of strange powers. For one thing she is ambidextrous, but her left hand writes backwards. I mean it: Ms Simmonds writes fluent mirror writing. I asked her to demonstrate, and she wrote:

"Hello my name is Fred"

in a single flourish. "It's because I do a lot with this hand [the left] but I'm very right-handed as well. The left is the one that goes automatically to do things, but the right has become the one I draw with. But then the left is much better at sharpening pencils and cutting things out. And serving tennis balls." Sadly, the ambidextrous facility is not just a useless gift, it means she can't drive a car; "Because I can't distinguish left from right. My sense of direction is OK, but if I were approaching a roundabout, and there was nothing in front of me turning off, I wouldn't naturally go left. I'd somehow see the traffic from a different perspective *at the same time*."

What else could she do? Cast runes? Sing in a voice that shatters glass? Sex chickens? "Oh I can do chickens," she said, with the demure matter-of-factness of Delia Smith saying she can do fairy cakes. You mean a chicken impersonation? How did it go? "It depends," she said patiently, "which kind of chicken you mean." OK, I said, do a Buff Orpington. And in the chapel-like, grandfather-clock-ticking silence of her museum-like living room, Ms Simmonds produced a long-drawn-out, cluck-free note seething with melancholy, reverberating with regret: a perfect hen.

She was Rosemary at the font; Posy was a winsome variant of Rosie that stuck. Born in 1945, "on the day the bomb fell on Nagasaki, funnily enough", she grew up in Cookham Dene, Berkshire, the village that's still best known as the home of Stanley Spencer, the artist who painted the arrival of Christ at the local regatta. "I met him once," Posy said proudly. "He was painting the angel at the lych-gate of Cookham church, with his pram beside him containing all his materials. I remember saying 'Hello Stanley Spencer'. He said, 'Have a Spangle' so I did. It was a red one." She was one of five children born to a well-to-do dairy farmer. Her mother was "a very capable woman. I can remember her ironing 11 tons of shirts, when my brothers started going to parties, or sloping off looking for some peace and quiet with her *Times* crossword, which she could do in 20 minutes." The future cartoonist was intrigued by the Bible, which she read in its entirety. "I was very puzzled by lots of things, particularly about sex," she remembers. "It would say, 'And then so-and-so lay with so-and-so' – or was it 'he *went in unto her*' – and she begat Absalom... and then begat somebody else and someone after that'. I thought, God, you only have to do it *once* and sometimes you get one child and sometimes you go on and on, having nine of them..."

'Famous Fred': coming to a small screen near you

Her other reading was comics, which she devoured, learning to draw in their idiom. "We had the *Dandy* and *Beano* and *Topper*, but because there was an American airbase at Ruislip, we got to see American comics too – Superman and Spiderman and Caspar the Ghost and Sad Sack and Dagwood and Blondie..." She went to St Anne's Caversham, a boarding school, then to France to study at the Sorbonne: the latter experience became a film called *The Frog Prince*, for which she wrote the original story. Although it was produced by David Puttnam (and is very entertaining in a "Five Gels Go Mad in Paris" way) Posy is mystifyingly vague about her brush with the movie world: "There were lots of other things going on at the same time," is all she'll say.

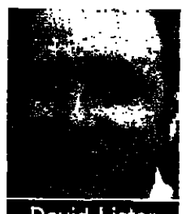
After Paris came art school and London – and the relationship that launched her career. "I was a very callow art student, I'd just left school and had no work and nowhere to live. But I'd met Mel Calman [the late *Times* cartoonist] who helped me in lots of ways. He said casually, my friend Jill Tweedie has a spare room – why not try her? So I rang her up out of the blue, and she said, it's still free, come over. And I became her lodger. It was the most extraordinary house off the Old Kent Road. *And* the first time I'd seen a Sixties conversion, with the stairs going straight down to the kitchen. The details stayed with me for a long time." It was, in short, the time of the Great Sixties Lifestyle Shift, which Posy, with her sharp eye for social leakage and behavioural posturing, took to like Cleopatra to asses' milk. "It was the first time I'd seen all kinds of things, like a duvet. Luc [Jill Tweedie's three-year-old son] had one because his father was Dutch. I remember thinking, this is not adequate covering for a child's bed, this *counterpane*. And the first time I saw a split hob and cooker, I kept thinking, Where on earth is the stove? Jill would have people over all the time, sitting around the table and talking endlessly, criticising things. Her table in the sitting room was always piled with books. It was absolutely eye-opening."

It was on Tweedie's seminal but much-ridiculed *Guardian* Women's Page that the Posy strip was born, and it does not take a genius to see the germ of Wendy and George and their homemade-wine-and-deconstructionist-theory lifestyle in this description, although Posy isn't keen on such simple correspondences. Jill Tweedie's death from motor neurone disease (the same year as Mel Calman's death) took away a mentor as much as a friend. "She made me think and look at things. She'd ask me all kinds of things about feminist matters which I hadn't thought about at all. She was amazingly stimulating."

Later she showed me her study, where a great wooden desk groans under a slew of papers. Posy works at a second desk, in front of a large mirror – not from vanity, but so that she can check the exact quality of her characters' facial expressions, as modelled by herself. She is completing a collection of illustrations for Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, and working on her *magnum opus*. It's a graphic novel "about adultery and soft furnishings", which will take her another year to finish and will then be serialised in a newspaper. From a privileged sneak preview, it seems a more serious undertaking than anything she's done before, full of narrative, facial close-ups, balloons and a faint air of decadence. Completing it will be slow, painstaking, hothouse work. She wonders if she should be doing some travel, getting out more, trying other things – but you know her heart isn't in such adventures. Her heart is in her work. Like a Victorian seamstress, she is happiest stitching and restitching tiny details of line and shade into works of the utmost proportion, harmony and charm – miniature, like the life she embodies, but perfect.

ADRIAN DENNIS

Posy Simmonds on children: 'Usually they want me to draw them things from Super Nintendo games'



David Lister
arts notebook

It always surprises me when actors and actresses claim a deep affinity with the characters they are playing. Surely it demands less talent to play yourself or someone physically, spiritually and emotionally like yourself than it does to play someone who is temperamentally a complete stranger. Were I on the Academy Awards Committee that's how my thinking would go. Nevertheless, Madonna, now an Oscar possibility for *Evita*, this week claimed she identified "on many levels" with Eva Peron, from their mutual love of dancing to coming from a small town and hitting the big city and achieving "something incredible" with their lives. Madonna still seemed to be identifying with a president's wife when I met her this week and she graciously allowed me to kiss her hand. She told me she doesn't know what her next project will be. I suggest that in the interests of role identification she should steer clear of *Hedda Gabler*.

The Policy Studies Institute this week released the most comprehensive account of arts funding in the UK yet published. The study, "Culture as Commodity", received scant attention, perhaps because the year it focuses on, 1993-94, was the year before the introduction of the National Lottery, which rather moved the goalposts on arts funding. It is not without its interesting statistics though. The study shows that only 50 per cent of arts funding comes from the Department of National Heritage, Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland Office.
Fourteen per cent comes from other government departments, 24 per cent from local government, five per cent from Europe, four per cent from business and four per cent from charities, trusts and volunteers. It's a surprise that DNH ministers, faced with the annual campaign over the size of the DNH grant to the arts, do not point out these other sources of funding more vociferously. I suspect that in future they will.

Talking of statistics, the Royal Albert Hall has uncovered a few of its own in a glossy new booklet celebrating its 125th anniversary. England and Italy competed at the turn of the century in an indoor marathon race, doing 524 laps of the Hall in 1909. A mass baptism complete with the "river Jordan", a galvanised iron tank surrounded with sand and flowers, took place at Easter 1928. The Beatles and Rolling Stones appeared on the same bill in 1963. Yet when Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli and Sammy Davis Jnr appeared together in 1989, it was called the Ultimate Event.

National Theatre actor Colin Stinton's feat of appearing in two of the complex's theatres on the same nights – changing costumes several times as he rushes back and forth from the all-singing, all-dancing *Guys and Dolls* to the quiet tragedy of *Death of a Salesman* – is commendable but doomed. One of these nights he will quite simply flip, cut down in his acting prime by a case of theatrical split personality as he grabs Willy Loman's lapels and yells "Sit down you're rocking the boat". His fate is clear – a lengthy sojourn in the Royal Hospital For Split Personality Actors, where he will spend his days playing dominoes with Madonna.

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arts & books

Flitter-brained pseud-heads

Pat Kane contemplates new Yuppie fluidity in a post-human world

X marks the Nineties. Douglas Coupland's latest book follows the Generation X he identified at the beginning of the decade – still lost, but finding their way through frantic consumerism; still empty, but filling up with strange new machine dreams. Where Coupland's "X" identifies an aching desire, the "X" of *The X-Files* describes a howling panic – about science, government, spirituality, reality itself. The academics, in *Deny All Knowledge*, are rushing in to stake their claim on the phenomenon. But do these crosses cover the same terrain? How much of the decade lies between these two letters?

Coupland delicately sets the paradox of the Nineties before us in a series of "microstories" from Washington at the height of the "Super Tuesday" electoral decider in 1992. These are four individuals, variously involved in Beltway politics, who are brilliantly casual readers of the signs of their times. Yet this semiotic articulacy, this refrigerated cool, only compensates for a general powerlessness.

Matthew the activist, sucking on a Snapple in a campaign office, can eviscerate the smug 21-year olds "eagerly building a political component into their resumés". He can snap-judge the RepubliCrat consensus as "the Disney version of democracy". Yet he also knows that "all the old tricks of success in the world" – education, a broad skill base, literacy, numeracy – are no longer guarantees of anything". In spare moments, his childhood dream returns to him: hungry urchins looking for food in the White House.

Tim is a "vulnerability consultant" for politicians, who interviews the impoverished ex-mistresses of important senators, worshipping his database as it locates "sensitive spots" for his clients. Yet one day, Tim finds himself transfixed by the excavation of some old Washington earth by sewage contractors: his keyboard-flossed fingers rake through 18th-century muck, looking for "antique junk...maybe a few coins".

Coupland keeps rubbing the media-led immateriality of the Nineties – all those brand names, TV memories, digital morphings – in the dirt of an elemental materialism. What fascinates him about the Grateful Dead concerts early in this decade, for example, is the clash between the pure low-tech Deadheads of the Sixties and the modem-using, flitter-brained Pseud-Heads of the Nineties.

The old lament the trinket superficiality of the young; the young sneer at the earthy lassitude of the old. Yet both congregate in vast American spaces – the hippies to "appreciate the true Dead spirit", the digital generation to find "constructive new hints on how to deal with the new thought-based economy". Perhaps the fact that there can be such a classical tussle between generations – but on a common terrain of narcotics, music and technology – shows how futuristic the nineties are.

Screw up your eyes, and Coupland's stories are like a post-modern *Dubliners*: snapshots of a community huddled around the edge of a new century, yearning for togetherness but having to build it carefully, day by day, fragment by fragment.

The X-Files identifies another key faultline of the Nineties – the changing boundary between self and world in the West that the speedier Californians call the "post-human condition". Coupland's X-generation are soft, squashy, cybernetic souls, so determined by mall culture that they become "microserfs" – over-exploited but gently cynical. Perhaps, hazards Coupland, this weakness is a kind of strength. "How are we to know that people with 'no lives' aren't really on the new frontier of human sentience?"

The X-Files accepts that there may well be a real paradigm shift going on, but the programme reacts in an opposed way. It is uptight, nervily paranoiac, pitting reason and unreason against each other in a holy war. These are yuppies who can't cope with the new, fluid times – who fearfully recognise the chaos of modern culture, with its electronic spectres and apparitions, as indicating something "beyond" nature.

The academic papers in *Deny All Knowledge: Reading the X-Files* make much of the tension between the series' agents as they pursue the inexplicable – Fox Mulder's open-mindedness, Dana Scully's frowning scepticism. But they're still The Suit With Two Heads: crisp public-sector professionals, upon whose starched shirts beat shadowy monsters.

As the editors say, there could be nothing less like 1980s camp irony than the slogan "The Truth Is Out There". Read it literally, and you have the Enlightenment project in a nutshell. But this is Western rationality gone wild-eyed, hunting interbred human-aliens. Its "agents" are subverted in their agency: they find mysterious electronic chips in their neck and suffer hallucinations that undermine their identities. Whereas Coupland's selves are blending into the new times, *The X-Files* shows the self under siege, struggling to awake from the nightmare of orthodox reason.

Of course, it's only a TV show. One of the good things about *Deny All Knowledge*, as opposed to the rest of the X-philia on the X-mas shelves, is its pedantic but useful cultural-studies approach to the phenomenon. It's sweet to see academics light-footed enough to do their audience research on-line. Their quotations from *alt.x-files* newsgroups and America On-Line forums bring bursts of colour into the gunmetal-grey of methodology.

Yet books like this make me very annoyed with cultural studies. There are so many important analytic tools deployed here – about the *X-Files* in relation to mythology, late capitalism, sexual ambiguity, TV genre, police history. But if you didn't speak Theory and weren't willing to tolerate writing styles clunky beyond belief, you'd throw the book away in five minutes. If there's any refuge left in this accelerated world for reflection on where we're going, it has to be in academia. Yet what use is this realm if it results in esoteric chatter? Public prose, rather than private code, is the least subsidised intellectuals can do for us.

Otherwise, you rely on smooth pop essayists like Coupland to make sense of the era. Unless you've been around a little, it's all too easy to agree with his weightless euphoria about the Nineties. I seized on his essay about Palo Alto, Silicon Valley's middle-class dream town, having been there myself. Coupland is bourgeois-rhapsodic: Palo Alto "lurks in the backs of many minds as the ideal that is worth fighting for". Lawn sprinklers sprinkle, craft shops sell, Stanford students dawdle, software geniuses make millions.

Indeed they do. But beyond the picket fences, Palo Alto has its ramshackle immigrant quarter, an appalling ghetto into which the info-class's Latino gardeners and maids are cast at the end of each day.

In 1994, East PA became the murder capital of America – toting up more fatal shootings per head of population than any other urban area. Yes, info-capitalism blurs and mixes everything, turns ground into lava, destructively creates a new world. But some of its dead really do deserve one true Polaroid, at least.

Polaroids from the Dead *by Douglas Coupland, Flamingo, £12.99*

Deny all Knowledge: reading the X-Files *edited by David Lavery, Angela Hague and Marla Cartwright, Faber, £8.99*

Off-line alien (left) in 'Anasazi' and (right) Scully, the female half of "the suit with two heads" pursues the inexplicable in 'End Game'

Suits case

Hugo Barnacle on a style warrior

Dressed to Kill *by Jay McInerney and others, Flammarion, £29.95*

In the first essay of this handsomely-produced symposium on James Bond as style warrior, Jay McInerney recalls the impact of the early Bond films on an America where any man "who knew too much about food and wine, or clothes, was suspected of – shall we say femininity?"

McInerney's childhood hero until then was the rustic but sincere Congressman Davy Crockett, as played in the Disney film by Fess Parker. "To remember just how rugged and frontier-like American life was in many respects at that time, I recall that my family, living in a suburb near Seattle in 1963, had just discovered an exotic new food called pizza...".

All the same, "The country at large was undoubtedly ready for Bond," because of John F Kennedy. He listed Ian Fleming's *From Russia With Love* as one of his ten favourite novels in *Life*, "after Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*".

After his assassination, the importance of Bond was all the greater as "the dead president's British alter ego continued to elude assassins." But for schoolboys there was another element of empathy with 007. "From the moment that a boy first identifies the sexual impulse, which in my case was about 1963 until the moment that he consummates his most profoundly burning ambition, life is a case of espionage."

McInerney, like many, has never quite grown out of the Bond thing, and still finds himself coming to London to have suits made on the Row and clock up some serious wine-sampling. Even when you aren't out to score, the sophisticated worldliness of Bond offers a good role.

The idea should have been laughed to death by now, but it won't lie down. This book's compiler, Colin Woodhead, has found some wonderfully naff ads for the rather downmarket 007-branded clothes and drinks that over-proliferated in 1965. And the mockery led to the decade-long Roger Moore cycle, when audiences would only accept Bond as panto parody.

Many stills from those films appear here, featuring Moore's leisurewear in all its grisly glory. But as Woodhead points out, Moore was "comparatively restrained" for the time: the picture shows him with his hairdresser, whose suit and shirt defy description and make Roger look a model of understated chic. People forget just how staggeringly awful the Seventies really were.

An essay by Neil Norman relates the change in fortunes of the suit, "off the shoulders of the heroes" such as Sean Connery and "on to the backs of villains" in films like *Die Hard*. Good guys dressed down to the point where Bruce Willis won the day in a grubby (but sincere) vest, while Alan Rickman plunged to a well-deserved death in snide, supercilious Armani.

The book concludes with a weak PR *apologia* by Nick Sullivan for the Italian tailors Brioni, who clothed Brosnan far too richly in *Goldeneye*. Bond is a bit of a Calvinist and Connery's severe Savile Row suits were the only right way to dress the part. Oh, and next time, Mr Brosnan, do like Sean and tuck those pocket flaps in. It's a British thing. If you leave them out you look like an enemy impostor who hasn't quite mastered the drill. Connery's original Bond would shoot you on sight.

Clint Eastwood: anti-hero or Hollywood institution?

The squint, the sigh, and the soul of a loner

Graham McCann follows the fortunes of a shifting star

Clint Eastwood *by Richard Schickel, Cape, £17.99*

Clint Eastwood is one movie star who seems to have grown bigger as the pictures have grown smaller. Over a career that spans four decades, he has graduated from bland bit-part player in 13-movies ("Nice guy – zip personality, zip talent", read his first studio report), to television star (as Rowdy Yates, "idiot of the plains", in *Rawhide*), to Hollywood outsider (the "Man With No Name" of Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns), to Hollywood anti-hero (*Dirty Harry*), to Hollywood auteur (*Bird, Unforgiven*), to Hollywood institution, a latter-day Gary Cooper, the Good American.

If, as Emerson warned us, we all come eventually to "cloy of the honey of each peculiar greatness", then Eastwood's slow and subtle evolution has helped preserve and enhance the novelty of his appeal far beyond the first flush of stardom.

Richard Schickel's major new biography – written with Eastwood's co-operation chronicles the development of this extraordinary career. The life is, for the most part, treated to the kind of politely discreet once-over that is customary with (semi) authorised studies – at times, indeed, one senses the author pulling back, perhaps fearing a repetition of that famously threatening utterance, "Go ahead, make my day" – but the career is subjected to admirably rigorous scrutiny.

It divides, broadly, into three parts: first, the early years, and the invention of a distinctive screen image – the strong, silent American, with the squint, the sigh and the soul of the loner, the man who expresses the problems men have in making connections (with other men, with women, with communities, even – or especially – with their best selves); second, a time of reflection on the stardom this image attracted, and a period of ironic commentary; and third, a mature acceptance of the extent to which the image has now become the man.

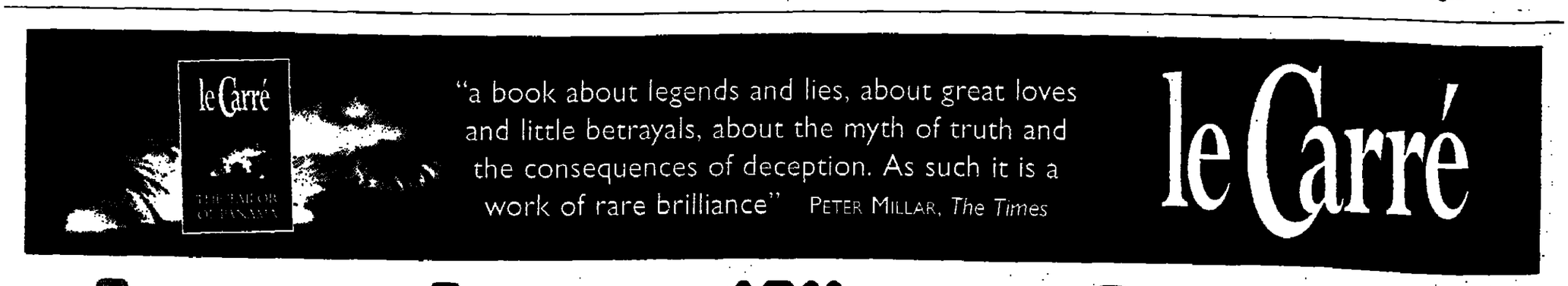
It is the second of these parts that Schickel suggests, convincingly, holds the key to Eastwood's enduring success. *A Fistful of Dollars* and its two sequels made Eastwood a curiosity, and *Dirty Harry* made him a star, but, as Schickel notes, it was the series of lighter movies in the second half of the Seventies that brought depth to that stardom: "In every great star career", writes Schickel, "there comes a time to signal in some completely obvious way that whatever the joke about you is, you're in on it." Such self-satire, if it comes too soon in a career, can come over as cynicism, while if it comes too late it can seem like desperation, but, in Eastwood's case (with movies such as *Bronco Billy*), it came at just the right time.

That Eastwood was able to act on such good judgment owed much to the effective manner in which he had exploited what Schickel terms his rage both "for and against" order. His rage for order showed itself in the formulation at the start of the Seventies of Malpaso, his independent production company, and his subsequent second career as his own director and producer.

His rage against order has shown itself, says Schickel, in the way he has used this hard-won independence to celebrate those characters who symbolise that stubborn resistance to order. This complex rage, argues Schickel, is the thing that engages us: "in a time when public figures are forever trying to ingratiate themselves with us, you can see something exemplary in his on-screen refusal to be easily liked, and in his off-screen refusal to be easily understood."

Schickel's biography is, by some way, the best so far of this most self-conscious of stars, but, at over 500 pages in length, it is perhaps a little too indulgent for its, and its subject's, own good. At a time when there are too many writers straining to write big books, and too few striving to write brilliant essays, it is a pity that Richard Schickel, who is a brilliant essayist, should have been badgered or bullied into compiling a book quite as big as this. With fewer laboured summaries of the star's lesser movies, and more of the author's typically incisive and humane insights into the star's life and image, it would have been a shorter but more accomplished discussion.

As it is, this is still a very welcome and often rather enlightening account of an intriguing man and a slyly inventive star.



Brazen and brainless in Byzantium

Philip Mansel on a city that hosted high life but no high thought

Istanbul: the Imperial City *by John Freely, Viking, £22.50*

Geography and history make Istanbul unique. No other city bestrides two continents. No other city has a longer or more continuous imperial past: capital of the Byzantine Empire from 330 to 1453, and the Ottoman Empire from 1453 to 1922. Writers have responded with appropriately deferential epithets: "the city of all cities", "the Queen of cities", or simply, as it is still called by many Greeks, "the City".

John Freely has lived in Istanbul during its transformation from a relatively forgotten city of a million, as it was when he arrived to teach in 1960, into today's commercial metropolis of more than 12 million people. Having written guide books to Greece, Athens and the Cyclades, as well as four books about Istanbul itself, Freely has an especial sympathy for the Greek heritage of this Turkish city. He notes that liturgies are still celebrated on their feast-day for the city's founder the Emperor Constantine, and his mother Helena, at the church of Saints Constantine and Helena in Samatya. Every Feast of the Annunciation, and during the following Lent, both Turks and Greeks drink the sacred water at the fountain of the Virgin of Blachernae, in commemoration of her success in saving the city from besieging Avars in 626.

Freely abounds in colourful details about, for example, the lovers of the Empress Zoe or the laments composed by the last Janissaries after their corps' destruction in 1826, while hiding from the Sultan's forces in the chambers used to heat the baths of the city. He is especially eloquent on the physical setting of the city, on the varieties of winds, boats and fish which crowd into the Bosphorus, the tavern-lined waterway separating Europe and Asia.

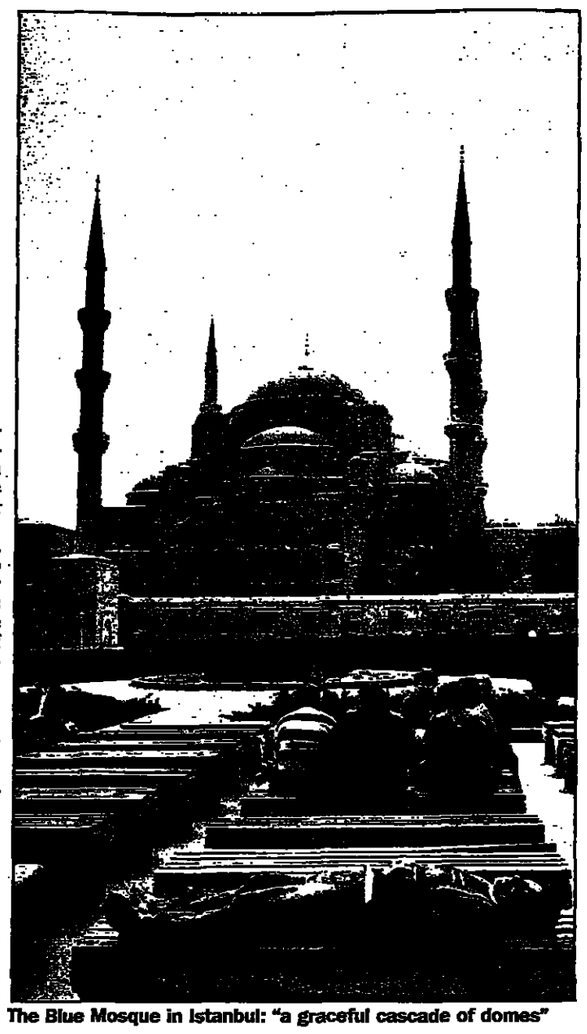
Some winds are named after roasting walnuts, the Pleiades or cuckoos. According to Freely, one or two caravels – ships of the type in which Columbus sailed to America – still use the Bosphorus. At the end of the book there is a gazeteer on the monuments and museums of the city, such as the great Sultan Ahmet mosque with its "graceful cascade of domes and minarets".

However, his book is essentially a gallop through 1600 years of imperial history (the periods preceding the foundation of the city and following the end of the Ottoman Empire are also covered). Constantius succeeds Constantine, Mehmed succeeds Murad. The city expands, contracts, and after the Ottoman conquest, expands again. For a time, it becomes, as in its Byzantine heyday, the largest city in Europe. Yet its way of life and culture, at once creation and creator of the rulers in the palace, are neglected. Readers learn more about the events of their reigns – many of them well outside the city – than about the laws, food and clothes prevalent in Istanbul.

Freely does not address the central paradox of the city. According to one Byzantine writer, Constantinople gleamed with gold and porphyry. An Ottoman poet claimed that it made heaven itself gasp with envy. However, one characteristic of the city, in addition to physical beauty and imperial tradition, is an absence of creativity and intellectual curiosity. They were less apparent, on the seven hills of Byzantium and along the shores of the Bosphorus, than religious fervour or desire for power.

Istanbul produced few, or no, geniuses comparable to those who flourished in Baghdad, Vienna or Paris. The published diaries, letters and memoirs of its inhabitants are often less revealing than those of foreign visitors. For an international metropolis which was the focus of pleasure, ambition and trade for millions, and gloried in the epithet "Refuge of the Universe", this is bewildering.

Possibly, personal creativity was crushed by the repressive weight of the state. Perhaps residence in the capital of a state without fixed frontiers, constantly attacking or attacked, made the government and inhabitants particularly reserved. John Freely should write his own explanation – and his predictions for the future of this city which is now, for the first time in its history, ruled by a fundamentalist Islamic administration.



The Blue Mosque in Istanbul: "a graceful cascade of domes"

The flesh and the spirit

Chris Savage King applauds a romantic lord of the dance

Secret Muses: the life of Frederick Ashton *by Julie Kavanagh, Faber, £25*

In a bar near Old Compton Street recently, a video screen was relaying Frederick Ashton's ballet *The Tales of Beatrix Potter* to distracted punters. Ashton's standing in the Covent Garden repertory may be shaky, but it is good to know that he can still command devotees at street level.

Julie Kavanagh's biography has proved controversial because of its revelations about Ashton's love life – a series of mainly gay affairs that fuelled his work. The dance world has never been renowned for its adherence to family values, nor its aversion to gossip. *Secret Muses* introduces the giddy world of Ashton's youth in the 1920s – where if you weren't bisexual by nature, you at least "made an attempt to be". Kavanagh has a relish for salty anecdotes and an enjoyment of Ashton's milieu that displays real love for her subject.

In his amorous life, Ashton pursued boys for divine inspiration, and also availed himself of the more workaday conveniences provided by the casting couch. In *Secret Muses*, threads drawn between the life and the art are never reduced to a matter of crude cause and effect. They illuminate a body of work suffused with subtle eroticism. Ashton was a gentle and vulnerable man, and drew on the orgasmic rather than the orgiastic qualities of his dancers' movement. In his work, the dancer's body is pliant and sensuous, and romance is often implied in his rhapsodic *pas de deux*.

Ashton: "driven to dance"

In his private life, Ashton much preferred the role of the hunter to that of the chased, and this seems to have been a canny artistic decision. He protested a little too much in his pronouncements about his own longings and disappointments. He was moved more by transitory raptures than stodgy realism, and had little inclination to go in for queer marriage: "Queerness can't be permanent," he commented. "Queens are tarts and mistresses, not wives."

More direct creative stimulation came from women. Ashton was driven to dance after watching Pavlova and Isadora Duncan, and he served a choreographic apprenticeship with Bronislava Nijinska. He considered meeting the designer Sophie Fedorovitch "the greatest luck he ever had" and his career with the Royal Ballet was directed by Ninette de Valois. He frequently composed ballets through dancers' improvisations, and his work gave a central place to women.

Along with Balanchine, Ashton took classical ballet to peaks of beauty and perfection that the form is unlikely to achieve again. He was a master at revealing character through movement; his work stressed the intrinsic tenderness of the body, and its capacity for feeling and emotion. Attention to detail was lavished on all his creations, from the lofty heights of *The Dream*'s Titania, to the strutting hens in *La Fille Mal Gardée*. His source material was often slight, but once alchemised into dance, the effect was rarely trivial.

Ashton's work exemplifies Englishness in the best sense – combining comedy and *joie de vivre* with a lush romanticism rarely seen today. Artefacts like *Four Weddings and A Funeral* and Adventures in Motion Pictures's over-lauded production of *Swan Lake* are praised in these terms, but are only shadows of Ashton's artistic accomplishments, which have wit, passion and true grandeur. His ballets embody a temperament and sensibility both deeply recognisable, and also unique. His works deserve to live on in performance forever.

The scent of aubergines

Carole Angier and D J Taylor review the latest fiction from an invisible celebrity and an unsung hero

Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* burst upon the literary scene ten years ago. It was alarmingly nasty. Its serial-killer hero, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, was born without any odour of his own but, in compensation, with a preternaturally powerful nose. The hardest thing on earth to capture in words is smell. But Grenouille's inhuman gift for the creation of scents was perfectly expressed in Süskind's gift for describing them.

Next came *The Pigeon*, in which again the telling mirrors the tale – of a man so withdrawn that the telling is barely audible. Then he wrote *The Story of Mr Sommer*, which isn't the story of Mr Sommer at all but of a boy growing up in postwar Germany who meets and remeets the mysterious Mr S.

They are all finely crafted parables, set on the edge of madness, and it would be nice to be able to say that **Three Stories & a Reflection** (Bloomsbury, £10.95) is a return to that original form. Alas, no: this is an extremely slender offering which seems to me to dig a narrowing tunnel to a literary dead end.

The richest story, "Maître Mussard's Bequest", the closest to *Perfume*, is an ambitious, young man's story, in which the dying Maître reveals a vision of the death of the universe.

The other, later stories all seem to reflect the traps and terrors of the writing life. In "Death Wish", a young woman artist is tipped into depression and suicide by a critic's idle remark. In "A Battle", a stranger plays chess so coolly that a group of Sunday players imagines him to be the bold and brilliant Master they long for, though it's clear he's a vulgar sham.

The reflection, "Amnesia in litteris", is about a professional literary man who has forgotten everything he has ever read. This happens; if you read for a living, you do forget a lot. But the anonymous hero has lost everything, except one line: "You must change your life."

If "Death Wish" and "A Battle" express Süskind's artistic fears, "Amnesia in litteris" contains his recognition that he has reached the end of the road. And then I noticed the dates of these stories: 1979, 1981 and 1985. He managed *Mr Sommer* in 1991. But I hardly dare ask where Patrick Süskind is now. (CA)

It would be wrong, perhaps, to call John Murray an underrated writer – the jacket of his new novel carries salutations from Jonathan Coe, Margaret Forster and William Palmer – but it would be accurate to call him an underpurchased one. Published by small presses in the North of England, his novels sell in hundreds rather than thousands and his reputation survives on word-of-mouth.

This age-old story of neglect would hardly be worth bothering about were it not for the fierce and idiosyncratic talent being neglected. *Radio Activity*, Murray's last novel, was a send-up of the Cumbrian nuclear industry. **Reiver Blues** *(Flamband, £8.99)*, also set in the debatable lands around Carlisle is a similarly eclectic stew, taking in surrealist comedy, border history and international politics together with oriental sex manuals and exotic cuisine.

Most of it defies summary. Beginning with the panic attack experienced by Samuel Beatty, plump middle-aged further education tutor and Sanskrit expert, on discovering the dismal state of world affairs in that morning's *Guardian*, the novel soon snakes out beyond Samuel's relationship with his skinny, apparently duplicitous wife, Vanessa, to the local history of the 1590s, a pseudo-philosophical investigation of the nature of "borders" and the subtle application of these findings to various international trouble spots.

Ranging from straightforward funny dialogue to a much more savage, if understated, political satire, *Reiver Blues* is distinctly un-English in most of its influences and associations. It creates a kind of borders magic realism reminiscent of *MittelEuropa* rhapsodists such as Hrabal and Esterhazy. Nevertheless, what emerges from this agglomeration of sex, spectres and Murray's abiding aubergine fixation is a beguiling example of the English regional novel. (DJT)

Paperbacks

By Christopher Hirst and Lucasta Miller

Sir John Soane Architect by Dorothy Stroud (de la Mare, £18.99) Handsomely illustrated and scrupulously researched, this classic work reveals the energy and versatility of our finest architect after Wren. At its heart lies a tantalising sequence of interiors from Soane's masterpiece, the Bank of England, all but destroyed by bureaucratic vandalism in the Twenties. His unique style, seen here in designs ranging from a brewery to the interior of No 10 Downing Street, borrowed from both the classical and gothic traditions.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience by Jerry Hopkins (Plexus, £9.99) Though Hopkins does a fair job on the facts of Hendrix's early life – we learn how the hero of the underground beat a car-stealing rap by joining the paratroopers – he comes unstuck with the music: "a single noise f[illegible] the cosmos...football-field-[illegible]ed sheets of steel falling from the tops of cliffs." Understandably, the audience at the first Jimi Hendrix Experience gig in Croydon were "numbed". How a backing guitarist on the chitterling circuit was suddenly transformed into rock's most innovative performer is unexplained – but we are amply enlightened about sex and drugs and post-mortem litigation.

Dear Dodie: the life of Dodie Smith by Valerie Grove (Pimlico, £10) Brought out just in time to coincide with the recent film, this lively biography of the woman who created *101 Dalmatians* reveals her as a delightfully English eccentric, even if it doesn't manage to establish her as anything more than a minor talent. Her happy Lancashire childhood was followed by a miserable youth as an unsuccessful actress, during which she developed her tastes both for married men and exotic costumes. She worked as a shop assistant in Heals before turning to writing. In her prime, it was as a playwright that she was most famous, though one gets the impression that her plays would seem rather fey and sentimental today. (Ps. You're not meant to judge a book by its cover, but the spotty jacket is such a triumph of graphic design that it deserves a mention.)

Making the Cat Laugh: one woman's journal of single life on the margins by Lynn Truss (Penguin, £6.99) In past ages, a lone female with a cat was in danger of being prosecuted for witchcraft. These days, she's more likely to become a columnist, judging from this collection of pieces written for the *Times*, the *Listener* and *Woman's Journal*. Lynn Truss's doting attitude towards her feline friends is, in fact, the least funny thing in the book. It's her knack for lateral thinking – for pointing out the obvious in such a way that it becomes hilariously surreal – that provides the laugh-out-loud moments.

Strange Landscape by Christopher Frayling (Penguin/BBC, £6.99) Stemming from Frayling's televisual "journey through the Middle Ages", the text is as patchy as the series – wonderful about the great medieval cathedrals, long-winded on Abelard and Heloise. The introduction, which underlines the significance of the Middle Ages today, is stuffed with embarrassing lists of heavy metal bands and suchlike. Frayling provides an exciting entrée to an alien era, but it is unforgivable that this edition has been ransacked of all illustrators.

Journals Mid-Fifties: 1954-1958 by Allen Ginsberg (Penguin, £12.50) A pyrotechnical display of poetry, pornography and *pronunciamentos* from the poet as he straddles his 30th year. Modesty is not his strong suit – "Plato, Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Ginsberg all loved boys." Younger readers mystified by the appeal of a soggy old mystic only have to read a single page of this litany for a powerful reminder why Ginsberg exerted such influence in the Sixties. One highlight is a sleazy European tour with fellow Beats: "Peter needs a shave. I need a bath. Gregory needs a new personality."

A week in books

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Who can you rely on for a Christmas Day family ritual? Church, monarchy and even the Disney Corporation seem to have tired of shoring up morale at home. So, into this festive vacuum, steps Steven Spielberg. *Jurassic Park*, on BBC1, will unite the nation around a screeching horde of computerised velociraptors. $900 million in box-office receipts and a place of honour in most living-rooms: not bad for a movie with all the wit of a brontosaurus brain. It belongs in a sequence of epics – from *Jaws* to *Schindler's List* – whose role as modern sacraments far outrun their value as mere films. Oprah Winfrey once even said to him: "I sometimes feel that you aren't a real person, Steven, but that God has loaned you to us". Time for what Barry Humphries would call a Technicolour yawn.

That quote surfaces in Andrew Yule's new biography, *Steven Spielberg: father to the man* (Little,Brown, £16.99). Yule is a dogged sleuth with a rather wearing line in *Variety*-style Hollywood patter, but his tireless research only serves to show how hard it is to fix in words this nerdy shaman's power. This book can explain, for example, why Spielberg knocked a year off his age. (Supposedly born in 1947, he has in fact just passed what Yule calls "the big 5-0".) However, Spielberg's ability to create an ersatz catharsis in Bradford and Bogota alike calls for a critic with the combined strengths of Pauline Kael and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Faced with the task of assessment, Yule too often reaches for his fat cuttings file. It could be that the non-reading tycoon will always baffle old-style *verbal* types. Rather than respecting words, he stifles safe Good Books (*The Color Purple, Empire of the Sun, Schindler's Ark*) in primitive reverence. If the movies' future turned on what lies under Spielberg's baseball cap, we might well despair. But as John Pierson's smart and breezy chronicle of low-budget hustling in *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes* (Faber, £11.99) shows, one glory of recent US indie cinema has been its flair for fast and funny scripts. From Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* to Kevin Smith's *Clerks*, nifty words have staged a comeback. And no one could accuse the ultra-gabby Tarantino of promoting strong, silent heroes. So, with luck, the future on film may sound a bit more eloquent than the roar of a digitised *T Rex*.

Boyd Tonkin

The books you listen to

Soul food for Christmas. Godly and ungodly alike will enjoy David Suchet's calm, inspirational reading of **The Gospel According to St Luke** (Penguin, 3hrs, £8.99). Unabridged from the King James version, itself meant, of course, to be read aloud, it has more familiar quotes per minute than *Hamlet*. The Bible must these days rank embarrassingly high on people's "Books I mean to read" list. Do it the easy way, perhaps in the course of commuting to work now that *Today* has got so cantankerous, with this tasteful selection of the best bits of **The Old Testament** (Naxos, c 8hrs, £16.99), read brilliantly by a strong and varied cast, again in the authorised version.

Christina Hardyment

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Postmodern. Maybe

POP No Way Sis, The Empire Theatre, London

By Andrew Mueller

No Way Sis are not the first tribute act – this tawdry phenomenon, pioneered by Bjorn Again and the Australian Doors, has been with us for some time. No Way Sis are, however, unusual among tribute bands in the approval they have received from their idols (Noel Gallagher gave No Way Sis the guitar with which he recorded "Some Might Say") and unique in that they have a major record deal – their first single is a cover of the New Seekers's "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing", the song Oasis re-wrote as "Shakermaker".

This alone is postmodern enough to induce migraine; the further associations the song has with the slogans "Things go better with Coke" and "The real thing" could almost fuel speculation that No Way Sis were conceived as a quasi-situationist prank, a living critique of the Oasis leviathan, a witheringly accurate satire. Sadly, this hugely attractive notion is dispelled as soon as the five young Scots amble on-stage. They mean every last third-hand riff of it. They betray not the slightest flicker of recognition of the patent absurdity of it all.

As they plough through their note-perfect facsimiles of the Gallagher songbook, hamstrung only by the faux-Liam's comically inadequate voice, it's interesting to note the effect No Way Sis's stony-faced conviction has on the audience. At the start, the applause that greets them resembles the mocking, grudgingly welcoming reception a third division football grandstand affords the hapless but well-meaning centre-forward they tolerate in the knowledge that the real Alan Shearer has better things to do than bless their modest arena with his presence. By halfway, after No Way Sis have rattled off "Roll With It", "Round Are Way" and "Slide Away", the crowd, though sparse, have been well and truly won over, willing accomplices to a cheeky confidence trick.

Which, as they leave in a well-rehearsed Gallagher lope, has a certain symmetry to it. It's only a scaled-down re-enactment of the coup the real Oasis have pulled off, successfully selling themselves, then the country and then half the world – and counting – on the idea that they are the greatest rock 'n' roll band on the planet, their glaring limitations notwithstanding. That said, it remains a peculiar thought that No Way Sis are about to have a hit with the song the band they are impersonating ripped off to make themselves worthy of impersonating in the first place.

Liam-lookalike teaches world to sing: the real thing has no shame, so why should he? EDWARD SYKES

Well, hellooo! to a cosier class of camp

THEATRE Merry Wives of Windsor, RSC, Stratford

By Paul Taylor

Director Ian Judge and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* go together – in theory at least – like Fanny and Johnnie Cradock or FR and Queenie Leavis. With Judge and the major, truly searching plays in the Shakespeare canon, the match is often more a case of Newman and Baddiel. This is no longer as true as it was. His production, now transferred to the Barbican, of that difficult and demanding masterpiece *Troilus and Cressida* has its undoubted virtues. But with *Merry Wives*, just opened on the main stage at Stratford, Judge's sensibility – which tends towards cosy as opposed to radical camp – meets less opposition from the text.

There's a wonderful line in this play where Falstaff says, of his ducking in the Thames in the foul linen basket, "You may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking". And certainly my heart began to sink with some alacrity when the lights rose to reveal a cutesie scale model in the background of Windsor Castle, rolling fields and scattered cottages. It is all so reminiscent of the half-timbered Stratford skyline Judge inflicted on his depthless, Tourist Board *Twelfth Night*. The spectacle of tumbling children who look as if they've come straight off the covers of Elizabethan knitting patterns does not do much to counteract foreboding. Nor does the early knowledge that, with elephantine predictability, Christopher Luscombe has been hired to perform what is virtually his only role – a prissy, fringe-worrying "Shut That Door" type. With the result that, as sure as night follows day, he actually trolls off, at the end, with the young man he has been tricked into marrying. Radical, what? Not if you have even the faintest memory of Cheek By Jowl's all male *As You Like It*.

Happily, there are performances here that keep forcing the heart to bob back up from its intermittent plummetings. The best of all of them is Guy Henry's hilarious Doctor Caius, the mad, verbally challenged French doctor. Possessed of the thin, distorting-mirror tallness of a Tommy Tune, this young actor also has the kind of tapering face and staring eyes that provide the perfect arena for dotty self-preoccupation – though it makes you smile with pleasure rather than duck below the parapet. Stalking about the proceedings in a haze of half-comprehension, Henry's Caius is an instant comedy classic. Leslie Phillips may not be everybody's idea of Falstaff, but his performance is an intriguing collision between Shakespeare's fat knight and Phillips' stage and screen image as the louche, accident-prone lady-killer with the man-of-the-world saloon-bar drawl. The production makes a good joke of this when, at one point, it has his Falstaff disport himself in what looks like an Elizabethan anticipation of a bounder's silver-buttoned blue blazer.

As Mistress Ford, Susannah York, who is in radiant good looks, valuably allows the occasional shadow of a troubled cloud to float across her merriment. It's a shame that, as her frantically suspicious husband, an anaemic Edward Petherbridge comes over more like a middle-class version of EL Wisty than as a Basil Fawlty *avant la lettre*. He never drives the fast scenes into the degree of physical delirium that is required.

The male wigs look, fascinatingly, like an exhibition of, and homage to, the hairstyles of some of our leading female singers of yesteryear. Luscombe's is Barbra Streisand *c* 1965; Henry's is sheer Cleo Laine. What, no Dusty Springfield beehive? What can Dusty have done to the RSC to justify this cruel exclusion?

Booking: 01789 295623

God bless them every one

THEATRE A Christmas Carol, Lyric, Hammersmith

By David Benedict

Charles Dickens himself made a fortune doing solo readings from *A Christmas Carol*, so it is hardly surprising to find theatres turning his well-loved tale of Yuletide redemption into a Christmas show. A couple of years back, the RSC threw their resources at a grandiose staging but, despite some beautiful designs, it never rose above sentimentality, and Leslie Bricusse's musical version, *Scrooge*, is currently playing in a rickety, inept production at London's Dominion Theatre.

Neil Bartlett's new version at the Lyric Hammersmith is considerably more slimline but, paradoxically, it's far richer. Bartlett is the last person you expect to espouse Victorian values but one glance at the poster announcing Mr Richard Briers gives you a glimpse of what you're in for. Not that he has suddenly taken up authentic performance practice. He sticks to Victorian style, but plays it with contemporary theatrical story-telling techniques and Nineties anachronistic flourishes. The bustling townsfolk push supermarket trolleys and the excellent seven-strong ensemble switch costume, role and gender with consummate ease, wearing trainers beneath their frock coats and crinolines. It must be mayhem backstage as they rush behind the scenes to pop up as chorus, carollers and a multiplicity of characters. The performance I saw quelled a noisy audience of children into a (mostly) rapt silence, a testament to the atmosphere of clarity and concentration flowing between the cast and their public; no small feat considering Bartlett's risky decision to stick with the Victorian phraseology of Dickens's original.

Bartlett knows that effective story-telling is the key and he strips everything down to preserve it. Carol-singing is used to tie scenes together but Chris Mellor's arrangements avoid the obvious, cloying cadences of traditional harmonies; gone, too, is the sickly sentimentality that tends to lurk around the Cratchits. Briers abandons his trademark niceness to present a powerfully mean-spirited Scrooge. Most actors signal the happy ending from the word go, going about their nastiness with a nudge and a wink, but Briers never slips into cosiness. As a result, his journey is properly moving, his outburst of happiness genuinely joyous.

Designer Rae Smith uses an austere palette of sombre black and blinding white which explodes into colour with the arrival of the ghost of Christmas Present. The basic black box set proves hugely evocative as faces pop out of walls like an animated advent calendar, or a nostalgic vista of a snowbound childhood opens out across the night sky. She is aided and abetted by Paule Constable, who etches figures in scalding hard edges and catches wonderfully evocative snowfalls in shafts of cold, wintry light.

"The greatest success in the pudding line you have ever achieved," announces Bob Cratchit. The pace may flag at times, and occasionally you yearn for something a touch more frightening, but Bartlett and his shivering cast conjure up all the chills you need in this equally successful evening.

To 18 Jan. Booking: 0181-741 2311

Bah, humbug: Richard Briers as a powerfully mean-spirited Scrooge JOHN HAYNES

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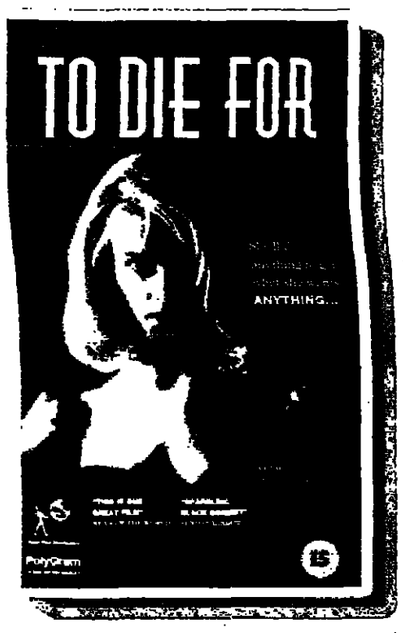

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	THE MUSICAL Guys and Dolls	THE FILM Evita	THE BALLET The Nutcracker
overview	Richard Eyre revives his legendary production of Frank Loesser's great American musical comedy, based on stories by Damon Runyon, designed by John Gunter, lighting by David Hersey, choreographed by David Toguri, with Imelda Staunton, Henry Goodman, Joanna Riding, Clarke Peters and Clive Rowe.	The inevitable film version of the Lloyd Webber / Rice musical, with a script by Oliver Stone and director Alan Parker – the man who gave us *Fame* – starring Madonna as the iconic Argentinian queen of hearts (and fascist consort) Eva Peron. Also starring Antonio Banderas and Jonathan Pryce.	The first London performances of Tchaikovsky's classic by the Kirov with their legendary *corps de ballet* choreographed by Vainonen. An ever-changing cast from willowy starlet Diana Vishneva to New York City Ballet's premier *danseur* Igor Zelensky, with the orchestra of the Birmingham Royal Ballet.
critical view	Paul Taylor levitated into transports of delight. "Wonderfully joyous... take your family. Take other people's families. Take your street. Then go again." "Vibrantly alive... polish, heart, quality, attention to detail and mastery of sweeping good cheer," sang the *Mail*. "Hysterically funny and heart-rending... If you're not bowled over you must be such a guy as will not be moved by anything," exulted *The Telegraph*. "Seems even better than it did 14 years ago... a superb show," agreed *The Guardian*. "Is there a more exhilarating show on offer this yuletide? If so, I don't know it," declared *The Times*. "A night of high musical pleasure," cheered the *Standard*.	Adam Mars-Jones found it "glossy and superannuated", and Madonna gives no "sense of a performer transforming or transcending herself". "We're never remotely tempted to cry for her... a failure," rebuked *Time Out*. "Madonna earns her stardom... but watching Parker's huge film is a relentless experience," choked the *Standard*. "Something is wrong with a musical when you keep hoping everyone will shut up," noted *The Times*. "May not be profound but nor is it shallow," said *The Guardian*. "A miracle... Madonna's Evita is beautifully sung, forthrightly characterised and wonderfully moving... barely puts a foot wrong," eulogised the *FT*.	Louise Levene lavished praise on Asylmuratova and the still "superb" corps de ballet but found the production disappointing. "No one on stage seems to act, yet we see a subtle *concertante ensemble* in which simple poses, light gesture, have a serene assurance," nodded the *FT*. "As a period piece, it holds a certain fascination," observed *The Times*. "Standards are slipping... overwhelmingly so in last night's underpowered presentation," chided the *Standard*. "At best Vainonen's steps are off-the-bolt classroom stuff, and at worst they show a comic fondness for stomping dutifully along to the music's beat," admonished *The Guardian*.
on view	At the National Theatre, London SE1 (0171-928 2252).	Cert PG, 133 mins, at the Odeon West End. Selected previews from 26 Dec, nationwide from 3 Jan.	At the Coliseum, London WC2 (0171-632 8300) until 4 Jan.
our view	Three hours of thrilling, roof-raising, sensational theatre that leaves you giddy with pleasure.	Madonna is typecast as a woman who redefines self-love. Over amplified in every sense.	One for talent-spotters but not a patch on the Birmingham Royal Ballet production.

KEY: EXCELLENT · GOOD · OK · POOR · DEADLY

هكذا من الاصل

هكذا من الاصل

travel & outdoors

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Reindeer country

Stephen Wood glides across Lapland on skis

Non-stop reindeer? Even in Finland wild herds are rarely seen

PHOTOGRAPH: HANS MADEJ/NETWORK

The first Friday of this month was a national holiday in Finland. This came both as a surprise to me – I had no idea I was arriving on the state's 79th birthday – and something of a relief: giving everyone on the plane a little bottle of sparkling wine in honour of a journalist from *The Independent* had seemed a bit excessive, until I gathered the pilot had in fact said "Independence Day". But my relief was tempered with anxiety. If it was a bank holiday weekend, wouldn't the winter sports area of Ylläs be very crowded?

The anxiety began to dissipate on the bus from the airport at Kittilä, in Lapland, the northernmost province of Finland. There was only one other passenger aboard and the road through the forest was so deserted that I idly started counting the vehicles that we passed coming the other way. Very idly. The bank holiday rush obviously hadn't pushed Lapland's population density much above its normal 2.1 people per square kilometre.

Lapland is deserted. In an area bigger than England and Wales put together it has a population about the size of Southampton's. True, there is a bit of a blip in December; that is when the British holidaymakers – an extraordinary 15,000 were expected this year – turn up to celebrate Christmas. The local resident, Santa Claus, is the big attraction, closely followed by the elves and, in the words of one British tour operator, "non-stop huskies, non-stop reindeer". Me, I was Scrooge on skis. Christmas could wait – I was going to spend the weekend cross-country skiing (for the first time) and trying the downhill slopes of Ylläs Fell.

Cross-country skiing is big in Lapland, for two reasons. First, the area is a bit short of mountains for downhill: Ylläs is the highest ski area in Finland, but the top of the fell is at only 718m. Second, there is snow on the ground from November to May, so jogging is out of the question. As is apparent from the grim concentration on the faces of skiers on the tracks around Akäslompolo – the main resort town for Ylläs – Finns regard cross-country primarily as a form of jogging. It is beautiful to watch, especially the traditional and misleadingly named "diagonal" style, in which the skis glide serenely forwards in parallel.

It has almost nothing in common with downhill skiing: there's little excitement or challenge; familiar rituals such as queuing for ski-lifts have no part in it; and it is very easy to learn. I can vouch for the last because I am a largely self-taught cross-country skier. I was supposed to have a lesson on my first day, but a mix-up with bookings meant that I missed my slot. Instead the equipment-hire shop gave me some boots (exquisitely light and comfortable, with a lip at the front to click into the tiny, hinge-effect ski binding), a pair of skis (also very light), two long poles (for forward propulsion rather than balance) and a short run-down on technique. Then off I went, with the encouraging advice that although I would find it difficult on the pavement, it would get easier on the tracks.

I think they meant "in the tracks". The extensive network of municipal cross-country tracks around Akäslompolo is prepared by piste-bashing machines, which flatten down a central reservation and cut two grooves, like railway lines, down either side. There's an "up" line and a "down" line (in Finland you ski on the right); the central reservation is for climbing inclines and, for macho types who use the "skating" style, a brutal but more effective method which involves pushing off a diagonal back ski in a kind of herringbone pattern.

Even on the tracks, there is a problem for beginners: still moving with an ungainly shuffle, you travel a lot more slowly than the experts, who glide. I felt like Thomas the Tank Engine on a TGV line. What was the correct cross-country etiquette? Was I supposed to make a hand-signal and pull over so that the group behind – I could hear them getting closer – might overtake? I chose to be rude and they struggled past on the central reservation.

Quite soon, though, I got into the grooves. When you think about it, cross-country is a nightmare of arm and leg co-ordination; when you stop thinking about it, it becomes completely natural. Your body slips into a laid-back, loping rhythm, which becomes utterly hypnotic. *Push* (on the back ski) and *glide* (on the front); *push* (forcing the middle of the back ski down on to the snow) and *glide* (unweighting the other so that only the slip-waxed front and back touch the snow); *push* (using the pole) and *glide* (moving the pole forward as the gliding ski slows, and becomes the back ski).

There would, I knew, be a song whose rhythm would complement the machine-like movement; and in the end I found it. My advice, if you are thinking of going cross-country skiing, is to listen to Bob Marley's *Buffalo Soldier* a few times before the trip. I can offer no advice, however, on how to stop or turn on cross-country skis. All the man in the hire shop would say was that they were both difficult. That was true, but not helpful. I had to improvise; if you sit down, I found, you will eventually stop. Then you can decide which direction to take.

Boldly I decided to try some cross-town skiing, and directed my skis down Akäslompolo's rather sparse main street to the pizza joint. After lunch, at dusk, I headed back. It was already half-past two in the afternoon.

What does the name Finland conjure up to you? Trees, snow, and probably gloom. Finland is not noted for its vivacity and animation. The Norwegians – not themselves usually regarded as a load of laughs – apparently enjoy a genre of Finnish "jokes", based on the notion that Finns are depressing, uncommunicative, and heavy drinkers. In one of them a couple are reunited after a long separation and go for a sauna together, taking some vodka with them. After a couple of hours' silent drinking, she asks him how he's been. He replies, after another couple of hours: "Did we come here to babble, or to drink?"

Gloom is undeniable – at least in Lapland in December. The sun never rises: as one Finn said to me, "It goes somewhere else." Daybreak comes at about 10.30am, and dusk follows four hours later. Even in the midday twilight, everything seems to be in black-and-white, under a heavy grey sky.

This does have a lowering effect on one's mood: I took some Sibelius with me, to set an authentically Finnish atmosphere, but it seemed absurdly jolly for Lapland. The lack of light also squeezes the day down in a most confusing way. Right after lunch it feels like time for tea and crumpets – and then there are five hours of darkness to kill before suppertime. The few "daylight" hours provoke a clock-watching anxiety, even though most of the skiing facilities are floodlit. I did get in half a cross-country skiing lesson on day two, but I had to leave early to catch the last bus to Ylläs Fell – which departed at 11am.

That was a mistake. Although Akäslompolo is well inside the Arctic Circle, the weather there was wimpishly warm, never falling below -3C during the day. Up on Ylläs Fell, the temperature was no lower, but a howling wind effectively took it down, so I was told, to -15C. In thick mist, and with the wind whipping snow off the fell, the visibility was so poor that I could hardly see my skis on the nursery-slope drag lift. On the T-bar up towards the summit it was cold enough to give me an instant headache – nature's way of telling you to get back to the restaurant. That ride, plus the 1,100m descent, cannot have taken more than about 10 minutes. But by the time I got back down, the eyebrow that had not been covered by my woolly hat was solid with ice. Between February and May, when the sun rises, Ylläs Fell is apparently a delightful place to ski; but I cannot recommend it on a freezing, misty day in December.

I thought I ought to ski the Mettänperkelheenrinne, because I have never been down a run with such a long name. Happily, it was closed, so I was able to get back to the cosy cross-country tracks at Akäslompolo before nightfall. Push and glide, push and glide: beautiful.

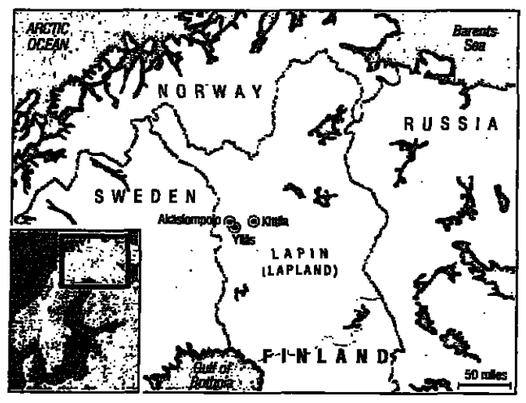
I had avoided Santa Claus, although his Akäslompolo residence was pointed out to me; I saw no elves, and no huskies. But on that last late afternoon, I did see some non-stop reindeer. I wish they had stopped, but they didn't. A group of them came slowly and timidly out of the forest behind me, crossed the ski track, and carried on to the frozen lake. To be honest, they looked too much like lumpy cattle for the moment to seem special – and anyway, until another cross-country skier came down a side track, I had no idea how special it was.

She had been to Lapland many times, she said, and this was only the second time she had seen wild reindeer. So I was lucky to see them? "You are very lucky," she said. "And so am I."

I went down to the edge of the lake to see if I could spot them again. But I couldn't see anything except shades of grey. The huge, flat sky perfectly matched the colour of the lake, with the strip of land on the other side just a slightly darker tone, one step down the Dulux colour chart. Then something peculiar happened. Perhaps it was the reindeer that caused it, or the affecting emotion of the woman to whom I had spoken; perhaps I had simply given in to the powerful, dark rhythm of the Arctic Circle. But suddenly the landscape and climate were no longer grim, just utterly and movingly awesome. Whatever, it wasn't the wind whipping off the lake that brought tears to my eyes.

Lapland: ski basics

Stephen Wood stayed at the Akäs Hotel in Akäslompolo, where a two/three person log cabin (with sauna) costs from 2,640 Finnish marks per week (about £350). He flew by Finnair, London-Helsinki-Kittilä – round-trip from £325. The hire of cross-country skiing equipment costs FIM70 (a little over £9) per day; a downhill ski-pass at Ylläs Fell costs FIM90 (£12), boots and skis FIM100 (£13). No major tour operators offer ski packages to Ylläs, although they are expected to do so next season. Tailor-made packages are available from Norvista (0171-409 7334): for example, an eight-day holiday in Ylläs, low season (5 January-14 February) costs from £648, flight and half-board included (two sharing). Further information: Finnish Tourist Board (0171-839 4048)



Watch out for the discounts

Simon Calder

If it's midwinter day, it must be time for the January sales. That is the logic that the travel industry is applying this weekend, in the hope that in between frantic shopping assaults on Marks & Spencer and Waterstone's, you and I will pop into a High Street travel agent and book a holiday.

The January sales push has begun ludicrously early this year, even by the standards of an industry that frequently seems to divert from reality. At my local branch of Thomas Cook, I noticed that the big "12 per cent" off notice was detachable, presumably so that an increased discount offered by rivals Going Places or Lunn Poly can be matched without ripping down the entire window display.

What concerns me more than the premature sales push is that the travel industry seems unwilling to take note of public and political pressure. The Office of Fair Trading castigated the way that discounts are contigent on the purchase of over-priced insurance. Indeed, it was one reason why the OFT referred the industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Yet if you glance at your local branch of Going Places today, you will see that the digits promising "12 per cent off" are about as big as this page. In contrast, you will need to press your nose against the window to see that the small print saying you have to buy the insurance is about the same size as this type. The standard insurance policy for a one-week holiday in Europe is £29.35.

Can I draw some more small print to your attention? This is the advertisement tucked in the back of *Travel Weekly*, one of the travel trade papers. This offers people who work in travel an annual policy, valid worldwide, for just £25.

As it happens, I will be calling in at Going Places to book a holiday today. And if you took our advice to buy a Bounty bar, you should, too: vouchers for the best offer of the year, a straight £50 for buying one bar of chocolate-covered coconut, expires on New Year's Eve. I shall buy a day trip to Seville in February for £129 (with no mandatory insurance), and the agency will hand me £50-worth of pesetas. This proved to be such a good deal that a rival tour operator is rumoured to have gone out and bought a gross of Bounty bars and organised an entire sales conference based on the promotion.

These pages will strive to bring you the best travel confections over the coming year, but tomorrow I am going on holiday. I always aim to celebrate my birthday, which is in four days' time, in a different location. Last year I spent the day hitch-hiking through eastern Zimbabwe, ending in a hostel in Umtata with certainly the least appetising Christmas dinner I have ever eaten.

This Christmas I have kept quiet about my plans, fearful that the trip is a sign of advancing years. If anyone asks, I just mutter something about the Dominican Republic. Keep it quiet, but I am actually going on a Caribbean cruise. The reason (besides the wish to have a decent Christmas dinner) is strictly financial: a week of backpacking through southern Africa cost me a straight £1,000 including flights. A Thomson cruise through the Leeward Islands actually cost £100 less. I shall tell you how they compare on 4 January. Meanwhile, may all your travels at Christmas and beyond be fun and fulfilling, and may you never need to claim on that over-priced insurance.

In the first *Independent* Magazine of 1997, you will read a travel special that includes a story by another birthday boy: Tony Wheeler. The founder of Lonely Planet Publications celebrated his 50th two days ago. He will be writing on his adopted home town of Melbourne for the Magazine, as part of an alphabetical trip around the globe from Antarctica to Zanzibar.

The world has changed considerably since Mr Wheeler first wrote *Across Asia on the Cheap in 1973*, which included the following exchange at the Iran-Afghanistan border:

"How long have you been here?", we asked. "About six hours."

"Good grief – what have you been doing all that time?"

"Blowing a little dope with the customs."

The marks of true celebrities are that their 50th birthdays should be a matter of note – and that they should be rumoured to have died. Both of these apply to Paul McCartney, and also to Mr Wheeler; he is supposed to have perished under the wheels of an Indian bus. But yesterday morning he was alive and well, and has almost forgiven his staff for their specially designed birthday card: a book cover entitled *Tony Wheeler: a Rough Guide*.

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IND 815

Don't have a car? You've been sleighed

Santa Claus is coming to town? Not on public transport, he's not. Simon Calder surveys the trains and boats and *planes over* Christmas – and offers the chance to 'name that tune' and win a festive prize.

Spot the song titles and win the new 'Rough Guide to Rock'. Contained in the following story are the titles of 16 *Christmas hits*, many of them naff. *If you can spot them all, you could be in the running* for a free copy of this new book, which retails at £17.99.

"I wish," crooned Roy Wood of Wizzard, "it could be Christmas every day." He cannot be much of a traveller. Were it permanently 25 December, then the transport map of Britain would look decidedly bleak. If a spaceman came travelling to the UK on Christmas Day, he would assume that almost no one went anywhere without a car.

Suppose Mr Wood wanted to venture from his home town of Birmingham to Wolverhampton to deliver some mistletoe and wine, and say merry Christmas, everybody, to his pals from the band Slade. He'd better watch out – not because Santa Claus is coming to town, but because the last northbound train from New Street is at 9.05pm on 24 December. The first one back is not until 6am, two-and-a-half days later. This story is repeated on almost all UK rail services on both Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The honourable exception is the Gatwick Express, which is making a late bid for bargain of the year. From 7am to 5.30pm on 25 December, trains will run every half-hour – and passengers travel free.

Midlands musos are better served on the buses. National Express is breaking its usual Christmas duck (or should that be turkey?), with a 25 December bus from Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Coventry to Heathrow and Gatwick airports. Another coach will link Swansea, Cardiff and Bristol with the pair of London airports. And that, as far as National Express is concerned, is *it. On 26 December, a limited service* of buses will run based around London and Birmingham. When Wizzard first hit the charts, Roy Wood *could have relied upon the London Underground network to whisk him around the capital on 25 December*, but the Tube closes altogether now. After 10pm on Christmas Eve, the Tube will be silent, night and day, until around 8am on Boxing Day.

A few London buses are *running*, including a free service, number 208, between *Lewisham and Bromley. Unlike last Christmas*, the Transport and General Workers' Union has brought its *festive* 732 service between Edgware Station and Cricklewood Broadway to a full stop.

The cavalry may have been the inspiration for the pricing policy on London *Buses on Christmas Day*, because the bus operators – like the Light Brigade – can charge what they like. The 716 bus from Trafalgar Square will get you close to Staples Corner, at the foot of the M1. The *Hitch-hikers' Manual: Britain* rates this as a four-star junction (average waiting time 10 minutes to travel north from here) and says that motorists are more prone to stop on 25 December than on any other day.

I was born on Christmas Day, so the *prospect of flying down to Rio (on Varig at 10pm) appeals* rather more. The price I was quoted was £650, but Mary's boy child would travel for one-tenth of this until His second birthday.

To reach Heathrow airport by public transport looks rather tougher than travelling by donkey to Bethlehem. The A1 and A2 Airbuses are running from Victoria and Euston respectively. These buses step into Christmas mode around 6am and step out again shortly before 3pm in time for a late lunch. With a seven-hour wait, I could be doing a lot of walking in the air terminal. The Gatwick-Heathrow link (6am-7pm) completes the airport loop, and enables you to yell, "A wombling Merry Christmas!" as you speed past Wimbledon.

Eurostar is running no services from Waterloo and Ashford to Brussels and Paris on 25 December. The reason, says the company, is that there are no connecting transport links on the British side.

It'll be lonely this Christmas down at the P&O terminal in Dover. But in the Stena Line cross-Channel schedules I've been studying, I saw three ships come sailing in – and three sailing back to Calais. A day-trip ticket costs £1.

To flee the transport inertia of Britain in December, stay in France – where you will find many trains and buses running normally, the sort of commitment to public transport I believe in. Father Christmas, though, might be tempted to ask: "Do they know it's Christmas?"

PHOTOMONTAGE: JONATHAN ANSTEE

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How to enter: Hidden in the story are 16 song titles. Your task is to identify them all. Write them on a piece of paper, or tear out/photocopy this story and highlight them. Then complete this sentence: "The best book to give Santa when he comes to town is the 'Rough Guide to' –", in as many words as you like. It could be an existing book – such as 'Turkey', both the home country of St Nicholas and his favourite dinner – or an imaginary one, such as the 'Rough Guide to Lapland and Chimney-climbing'.

The rules

1. "I wish it could be Christmas every day" counts, but "Flying down to Rio", and "I saw three ships" don't as neither were Christmas hits. And don't even think about "Waterloo", "Victoria", "Stop", or any other one-word wonders.
2. Punctuation should be ignored, so beware of things. Like this.
3. No Robson & Jerome songs or Andrew Lloyd Webber compositions are knowingly included, or comprise acceptable answers.
4. Don't worry if you can't get all 16; if you have a jolly good try and can think of a neat tie-break, you will be in the running.
5. The competition *is* open to employees of Newspaper Publishing plc and their relatives. This may save on postage.
6. The travel editor's decision is final. Only entertaining correspondence will be entered into.

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The air is so polluted you can smell it

Photo: Geraint Lewis

Two Kraków hours and counting

By Brian Patten

One evening in late November I checked into a hotel in Kraków, a city I'd not visited since 1984 when Poland was still a nation suppressed by the Soviet Union. I was on my way next morning to Katowice, in the Silesia region of the country, the industrial south, where blackened city merges into blackened city and the air is so polluted you can taste as well as smell it.

If you find time, write about Kraków, I was asked. How? I'm hardly there on this trip. OK, snapshots then.

I'm up early and pull the thin curtains apart. It's either just getting light, or the thick blanket of cloud is keeping the daylight at bay. The old city begins somewhere beyond the park across the road. A blue tram rattles in one direction, a yellow tram in another. By a car-park an old couple are setting up a stall selling pretzels.

I have two hours at the most, so it's out across the tramlines to the Planty, a strip of park that surrounds medieval Kraków. It has replaced the city walls, torn down by the invading Austrian army at the beginning of the 19th century.

Winter is some weeks on here. An avenue of bare trees stands out black in the morning mist, there's an abundance of rooks and pigeons, a solitary woman walks three Pekinese dogs – one so stunted it looks like a ball of soaking fur moving among the rain puddles. On a low hoarding at the side of the narrow park posters advertise art exhibitions and Kung Fu demonstrations. On a smoke-blackened stone plinth at an intersection of paths is a bust of Michael Palucki, an all-but-forgotten rebel general from the 18th century.

I'm heading for Rynek Glowny, the main square in the old city. My only point of reference is Hotel Polski, where I stayed years ago with a guide who panicked every time I slipped away. I find the hotel just inside the remnants of one of the few remaining bits of the old city wall around the corner from Ulica Florianska. Things have changed.

Florianska leads down to the main square and while it's not typical of all the shopping streets of Kraków – and in other circumstances hardly worth writing about – it does present a microcosm of what's taking place. At the top of Florianska, once a pretty drab place, there's now a McDonald's. It's to this icon of American culture that hoards of children are bussed in from the surrounding villages for special treats.

Suddenly a wonderful sight. An amazingly bright crocodile of children in coloured bobble-hats and bright parka jackets, like a living stream of Smarties, flows past me. It's a wonderful sight not because they are heading to the hamburger shop, but because this chattering explosion of colour is the first generation of Polish children born free after so many years of occupation.

Getting there: the only scheduled flights from the UK to Kraków are on the Polish airline LOT. At present there are three flights each week from Heathrow (on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays), but frequency will increase from next spring. The fare through specialist agents such as Fregata Travel (0171-451 7000) is £213.20 including tax, which allows you to return from Warsaw instead of Kraków if you wish.

Further information: Polish National Tourist Office, First Floor, Remo House, 310-312 Regent Street, London W1R 5AJ (0171-580 8811).

Further down Florianska, between the Tourist Information Office and a shop selling furs, a man is kneeling, the little cardboard box in front of him falling apart in the drizzle. Head bowed as if in penance, a look of practised sorrow on his face, he holds the stump of his left arm. While managing to remain absolutely immobile, when a nun walks past him he spits. Across the street, outside a shop called Paradise with its window display of distinctly English tweedy jackets and brogues, is a blind young man, and an old Hungarian violin player in a wheelchair.

Benetton has arrived here, even Monsoon. But look above the shop fronts. The paint is flaking from buildings, niches that once contained holy statues are empty. Above them are dead rooms and broken windows. A sense of neglect hardly disguised by the invasion beneath.

Florianska Street leads into Mariacki Square, and once in the square, Kraków takes back its identity. The 14th-century Mariacki Church is one of the most beautiful in Poland. At the southern portal are iron holdfasts, cages in which sinners were kept on view, a more sophisticated version of the English village stocks. Outside one of the two entrances to the church – the one marked "For Prayer Only" – several Romanian gypsies, begging.

In the backstreets are other smaller churches and convents. In the doorway of one convent belonging to Dominican Sisters, a man in a blue beret kneels, praying, before a coloured poster advertising a concert to celebrate the 750th anniversary of St Salomei, a local nun. Across the road on the walls of Kosciol Nmp Sniezney – Our Lady of Snow – death notices flutter in the wind, some ripped and blown into the gutter. Someone has rested a ladder against a statue of the Virgin and is climbing up it to polish the fine gold stars welded to her halo. A few minutes away, above one of the doors of the Theological Academy in Kanonicza Street, is a painting of Christ and the money-lenders. The door opens and out walk a group of young priests. Christ, in a painted image above them, is dressed in almost identical theological garb.

Between the numerous churches in the medieval city are other huge studded doors, dark vestibules and narrow passageways. It can be disorientating, because as often as not these lead into tiny courtyards and up stairs to rooms in which you are just as likely to find a café or bar as a religious office.

Heading back to the main square I hear music, low and sad. I trace it to the octagonal turret below the crown-like spire of St Mariacki's Church where a small window has opened and a tiny figure is standing playing a trumpet. The window closes, and a few moments later another opens, and the trumpeter is back again.

In a café, the mystery of the trumpeter is explained to me. It seems Tartars came to conquer Kraków in the 16th century. A trumpeter, knowing they were approaching the city, played as loud as he could to warn people of the invasion, but before he finished playing he received an arrow through his throat. Although the music is played on the hour every hour, once a day, at noon, it is left unfinished. It's a romantic legend befitting a romantic city.

"The soul is in Kraków but the money is in Warsaw," says a local photographer, "and Kraków is more beautiful". I agree. Mine is a winter view of Kraków: the trees are bare and the rain cold. I've arrived in the wrong season so can't report on green avenues or squares crowded with flower-sellers. Still, if you've been to Prague then Kraków is the ideal follow-up – especially if you stay for longer than two hours.

Brian Patten's latest collection of poems, 'Armada', is published by Flamingo Books at £5.99.

Eastern winters of content

Bratislava and Sofia are still thawing from the Cold War. By Simon Calder

Checkpoint Charlie at dawn was a rather more exciting gateway to Eastern Europe than Victoria Coach Station is today. Seven years ago you had to spend weeks filling forms, acquiring visas and plotting how to satisfy (or transgress) arcane currency regulations. It was a venture into the unknown. The process of visiting Eastern Europe was like playing an extra in a monochrome spy movie; and sometimes, if you strayed across the ill-defined line between international comradeship and potential espionage, you could be given an unwelcome speaking part in the Cold War drama. I spent an uncomfortable 24 hours in the company of Ceausescu's Securitate in Bucharest after a spot of careless photography.

Now, the faceless bureaucrats have been replaced by flashy entrepreneurs, and black marketeers have turned into stalwarts of the business community. Thanks to the miracles of modern marketing, you can catch a bus from Victoria Coach Station to Prague, Warsaw or even the Ukraine for under £100 return.

The thrill of treading in truly alien territory has evaporated, but in its place is the joy of being able to explore freely a part of Europe kept in suspended animation for 40 years.

Seven winters ago, the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe collapsed. Bratislava and Sofia were two of the capital cities set free by the winter of discontent.

Bratislava

On New Year's morning 1993, Bratislava woke up and discovered it was, once more, a capital city. Unable to remain intact without the heavy hand of state communism, Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia – the hilly heart of Europe. Its largest city is parked in a corner of the country, from where you can walk to Austria in an hour, to Hungary, 90 minutes.

Celts settled here two millennia ago, Romans and Slavs followed. Bratislava became capital of Hungary when the Turks captured Budapest in 1536, and Hungarian monarchs were crowned here for more than 300 years. The coronation church is a Gothic masterpiece, the cathedral of St Martin, which trembles a little each time a lorry grumbles past on the trans-European superhighway that abuts it. The cathedral is best early on a bright Sunday morning, when the sun streams through the stained glass, softening the raw, austere interior – and the traffic outside is lightest.

Blearily shaking off the 45-year sleep under communism, the Slovak capital is blinking into metropolitan life. The new nation is still trying to purge the detritus of Soviet domination such as the Slovak National Uprising Bridge, perched like a wanton alien astride the Danube. It is a piece of decidedly uncivil engineering, an equilateral triangle on an absurd scale. But three-quarters of the Old Town has survived, comprising a startling muddle of Gothic, Baroque and Ottoman buildings.

Organising your mission: fly to Vienna, for around £160 return through discount agents, then take the connecting bus direct from Vienna airport across the border to Bratislava.

Sofia

Most of us have a pretty good idea of what eastern European capitals are like. They are all ringed with standard-issue graceless and faceless apartments, while their centres are architectural battlegrounds where office blocks – the bureaucrats within insulated by grubby net curtains – have smothered any semblance of style and history.

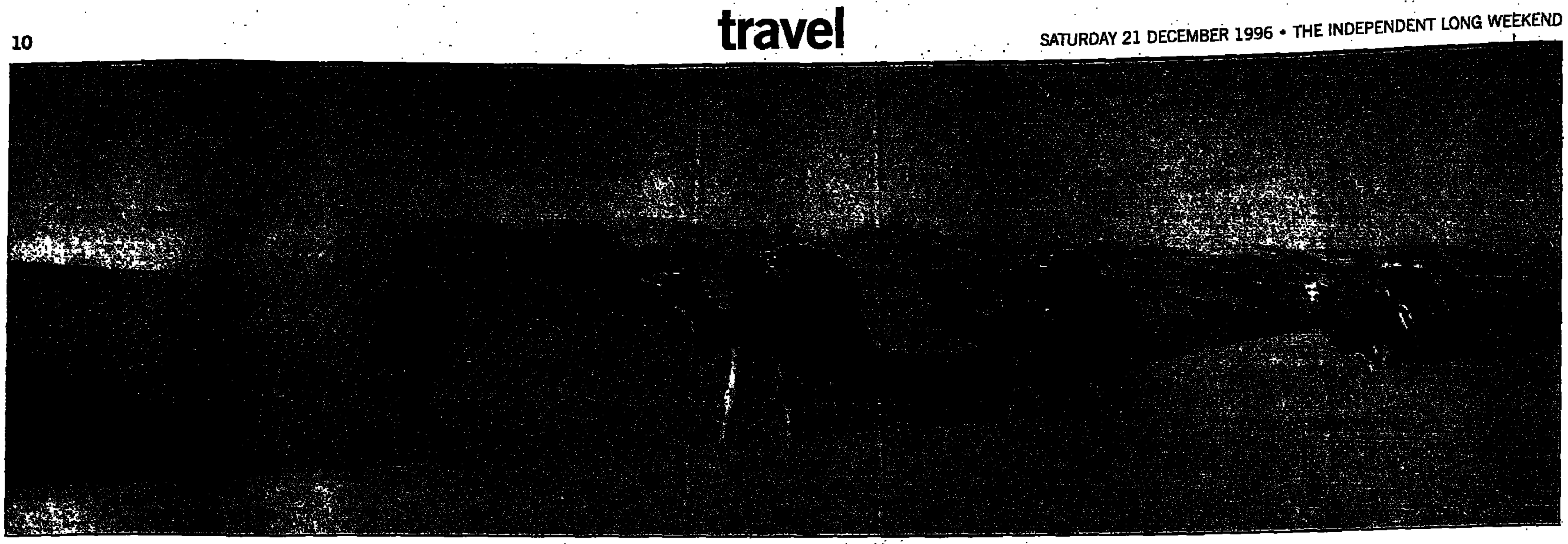
And Sofia must be worst of all, I thought. Bulgaria was the last of the Soviet satellites to embrace democracy, and its former leader Todor Zhivkov even toyed with the idea of turning his state into the 16th republic of the USSR. But Sofia is the great, uncelebrated eastern capital. It specialises in boulevards, seemingly dozens of them, each broader than the last and graced with slender plane trees.

Most of the city's landmarks are strewn casually around the Vitosha Boulevard axis. The mix of the humdrum and the historic has a certain charm, as if you have stumbled into a movie studio lot where the sets for a Fassbinderesque tale of urban angst have been jumbled up with a middle European fairy story.

The National Museum is a good place to get a political fix on the city. Specifically, wander around the back of this Italianate palace to the patch of waste-ground where the statues of those who have fallen from favour are stacked, undignified and unkempt. The building which does the most damage to Sofia's skyline is the one where the statues were commissioned: the former Communist Party Headquarters, a spectacularly Stalinist structure which casts a long and still-threatening winter shadow over the city. It has since become a cinema. *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is showing soon.

Invading the Balkans: Sofia is served from London by Balkan Bulgarian (0171-637 7637) and British Airways (0345 222111).

Photo: Simon Calder



Led by wise men

John Eisenhammer treks through the stark beauty of the Sahara

The Sahara is a cold land with a hot sun. Each day I was reminded of this bitterly apt description as Ibrahim, our Tuareg guide, woke us by banging on his metal platter. "Bonjooour," he cried, as the first thin flecks of light slipped over the razor edge of distant dunes.

Before dawn the temperature in the Sahara falls to close to zero in the early winter months. In January and February it drops below. You soon learn the art of crawling out of your sleeping bag while speedily putting on as many layers of clothing as possible in the dark without falling over into the damp sand. By 7am, however, you can already feel the heat of the sun and by 8am it is pleasantly warm. From then on you shed layers like an onion as the temperature steadily rises.

The Great Eastern Erg cuts a vast, sandy arc across Algeria and Tunisia, touching Libya. It is one of the largest of the ergs, which mean "vein" in Arabic. There are five main veins coursing through this vast desert expanse of north Africa. Such uncompromising lands of stark beauty and solitude have become second home to Jean Louis Bernezat and his wife Odette. For nearly 30 years they have been criss-crossing the deserts of Africa, developing a specialised tour business.

In small, French-speaking groups you can go trekking during the winter months from October to April (the summer being too hot) in Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Namibia (all year round) and, for the first time this year, Libya. The tours range from one-week trips to serious, five-week, Lawrence-of-Arabia stuff.

These are holidays for those who like to rough it and enjoy a reasonable physical challenge. My wife and I opted for one of the shorter trips – 11 days including seven days trekking – in Tunisia's Great Eastern Erg. Though reasonably sporty, neither of us is a serious walker. Of the other six in our group, most were keen ramblers.

The trek proper began once we were deposited near the edge of the Erg at a dried-up well called Bir Abdallah. Eight camels were waiting for us, accompanied by their owners, Mustapha and Msbah. The world of casual tourism was left well behind during our boneshaking ride south by Land Rover from Tozeur. All lingering thoughts of the luscious date plantations we had jolted past were blanketed out by the heat, dust and the sheer emptiness of where we made our first bivouac. We slept that night, as we would every night, in the open.

The following morning, after only a couple of hours' walking, we reached the Erg. It was as if some Olympian landscaper had cut a carefully delineated border, as the flat, scrawny scrubland ceased, and the undulating, sandy vastness began. A day later we reached Tumbain, a flat table mountain from whose top you look out on the infinity of the erg. The solitude of the place was awesome.

It is not the custom here to ride on camels. They carried all our supplies while we walked, though should anyone have fallen ill, they were there as an emergency ride. Serious medical help, however, would have been days away.

Our life soon fell into a pattern. Up just before dawn, a quick breakfast before loading the camels, and then a good four hours' walking. The sand is surprisingly firm underfoot. Sometimes we followed the caravan as it took the route of least resistance, but mostly we meandered across the crest of the high dunes, pursuing the diminutive figure of Ibrahim, swathed in his black *shesh*, as he padded bare-footed to the rhythm of his staff and his own thoughts. One imagines the landscape to be monotonous, but it is not. The play of light in the mornings and evenings, the sheer immensity of the place, the artistry of the dunes, some over 100m high, with their amazingly clean lines and graceful forms, are constant sources of wonderment.

Some time after 11am Ibrahim would plant his staff in the sand and we would all slump to the ground with an angry buzzing of hundreds of suddenly disturbed flies. The midday meal was a salad of cabbage, onions, olives and sliced lemon that tasted as if it was made by the angels. It came, as did everything, with a soupçon of fine-grained sand.

In the afternoon, we would walk for another two hours or more before finding a spot for the night and beginning the evening rituals of unloading the caravan and gathering firewood. Around the camp fire, Msbah would sing while Mustapha blew and grunted into a hand-made flute that looked suspiciously like the piece of plumbing missing from under the sink at the hotel in Tozeur. There followed much drinking of strong, sweet tea brewed in a battered metal teapot bubbling on the embers. Exhausted by the day's walking, we were usually all in our bags well before 9pm, gazing up at the wide-screen entertainment of the desert night sky, emblazoned with the Milky Way and the nervous flashes of shooting stars. The moon rose late, and shone with such intensity as it became fuller that you would waken during the night to a floodlit landscape bright enough to read by.

Most nights I was lulled to sleep by one of the camels, which, having found a flavoursome bush next to my sleeping bag, would treat me to a stereophonic display of its digestive rhythms. In the morning, the dew-soaked sand opened like a book, recounting the activities of the night that had gone on around us as we slept. There were the scratchy trails of beetles and lizards, the claw marks of kangaroo rats and desert mice, the dragged belly lines of a hedgehog and the energetic side-swipes of a viper.

It was from atop a dune of alpine proportions that we first saw Lakhwazat lake, the high point of our trip. Curling across a depression in the middle of the dunes, the silvery stain of the water seemed incongruous after four days of the nothingness of parched sand and heat. Ducks played among the reeds, and a few wild donkeys wandered about. The water flowed into the lake from a spring that bubbled up in the middle of the sand. The pungent, sulphurous water emerged, the temperature of a warm bath, into a small, natural, sandy tub. The aches from days of hard slogging slipped away as I lay in this heavenly pool. Only the sound of bubbling water broke the peace. I knew then that I had discovered the finest jacuzzi in the world.

John Eisenhammer bought his trek through Hommes et Montagnes, 38500 Voiron, France (00334 76 66 14 43)

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هدية من الاهل

Christmas guide to the arts, entertainment 21-27 December

Film
on release

ACTS OF LOVE (18) Dennis Hopper is nicely understated in his first real romantic lead, in this small-town reworking of *Lolita*.

THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO (U) Patchy live-action version of the children's classic.

ALASKA (PG) Kids' eco-thriller with two children trekking through Alaskan snowscapes to rescue their injured father.

AMERICAN BUFFALO (15) Dustin Hoffman stars in David Mamet's study of small-time crooks planning a heist.

ANTONIA'S LINE (15) (subtitles) Oscar-winning feminist drama, spanning five decades.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS (15) Breezy, bitter-sweet romantic comedy about a group of thirtysomething buddies.

LE BONHEUR (EST DANS LE PRE) (15) *(subtitles)* Underwhelming French farce about the boss of a toilet-seat factory who finds a new *joie de vivre*. With a cameo appearance by Eric Cantona.

BRASSED OFF (15) Moving drama about the decline of a mining community, as seen through the eyes of the local brass band.

BREAKING THE WAVES (18) Emily Watson gives a towering performance in Lars Von Triers' harrowing epic, set on the Scottish coast.

CHAIN REACTION (12) Brainless and confusing action movie, with Keanu Reeves discovering fusion and setting off a chain of chases and explosions.

A CHINESE GHOST STORY (15) Loopy martial-arts ghost story with effervescent humour and eerie effects.

COURAGE UNDER FIRE (15) Gulf War drama, with Denzel Washington trying to decide whether chopper pilot Meg Ryan should be awarded a posthumous medal for bravery.

THE CRAFT (15) Andrew Fleming's black teen movie about high-schoolcrones.

CRIMETIME (18) A TV-show serial killer gets tips from a real psychopath in this disappointing thriller from George Sluizer.

THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS (18) Hollowsequel, with Vincent Perez.

THE DAY OF THE BEAST (18) *(subtitles)* Gory, off-target black comedy from Spain.

THE DAY THE SUN TURNED COLD (12) *(subtitles)* A boy accuses his mother of killing his father in this sombre thriller from Hong Kong.

DRACULA: DEAD AND LOVING IT (PG) Mel Brooks's depressingly unfunny parody.

DRAGONHEART (PG) Winslice of SFX-laden hokum.

THE EIGHTH DAY (PG) Cloying French fable about a Down's syndrome sufferer.

EMMA (U) Gwyneth Paltrow is the irresistible matchmaker in the latest Austen adaptation.

EVITA (PG) Alan Parker's film of the Tim Rice/Andrew Lloyd Webber musical. The wordy and ultimately icic Eva Peron, is played with panache by Madonna, but the film lacks emotion.

THE FAN (15) De Niro stalks sportsman Wesley Snipes in Tony Scott's crude and sadistic chmo-noir.

FAREWELL MY LOVELY (PG) Forties film noir.

FARGO (15) Darkly comic thriller from the Coen brothers.

FEAR (18) Mark Wahlberg fails to convince as a psychopathic Casanova in this slick but grim, teen-date thriller.

FEELING MINNESOTA (18) Lumpen, loud thriller, with Keanu Reeves as a drifter who hooks up with his brother's wife, a femme fatale played by Cameron Diaz.

THE FIRST WIVES CLUB (PG) Midler, Hawn and Keaton exact revenge on their husbands in a popular but flimsy comedy.

FLED (PG) Incompetent re-run of *The Defiant Ones*.

GABBEH (NC) *(subtitles)* Good-looking but emotionally vacuous piece of Iranian folklore.

THE GLIMMER MAN (18) Witless Steven Seagal vehicle.

A GOOFY MOVIE (15) Goofy does some father-son bonding.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS (15) Jodie Foster directs this chilly, unsympathetic comedy about a dysfunctional family.

INDEPENDENCE DAY (12) Aliens invade in the over-hyped sci-fi blockbuster.

I SHOT ANDY WARHOL (18) Lili Taylor steals the show as violently radical feminist, Valerie Solanis, in this meditation on Warhol's 1960s Factory.

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU (12) Schlock adaptation of HG Wells's sci-fi classic, with Marlon Brando, Val Kilmer and David Thewlis.

JACK (PG) Abominable comedy from Francis Coppola, with Robin Williams playing a 10-year-old boy.

JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH (U) Part-animated adaptation of the children's classic.

JANE EYRE (PG) Zeffirelli's dull and unsentimental interpretation of Bronte's novel.

JINGLE ALL THE WAY (PG) Arnie races to buy his son the season's top toy in this unamusing and hypocritical Christmas comedy.

JUDE (15) Perceptive take on Hardy's tragic last novel, with Christopher Eccleston and Kate Winslet.

KANSAS CITY (15) Altman's mature and inventive study of 1930s low-life desperados.

THE LAST OF THE HIGH KINGS (15) Endearing Irish rites-of-passage comedy with a light touch.

THE LAST SUPPER (NC) Grimly emotive Aids movie in which the camera never leaves the room of the dying protagonist.

LONE STAR (15) Tightly plotted Tex-Mex murder mystery.

THE LONG KISS GOODNIGHT (15) Vulgar but thrilling action adventure, with Geena Davis as an All-American mum and amnesiac assassin.

MICHAEL COLLINS (15) Liam Neeson is the heroic visionary and terrorist in Neil Jordan's historical drama.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (PG) Leaden adaptation of Adrian Noble's RSC production.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE (PG) Cult TV series becomes state-of-the-art spy adventure, starring Tom Cruise.

MR RELIABLE (15) Aussie comedy set in the 1960s, which overstretches both credibility and sentimentality.

MULTIPLICITY (12) Intermittently inspired cloning comedy, starring Michael Keaton as four different aspects of the modern male.

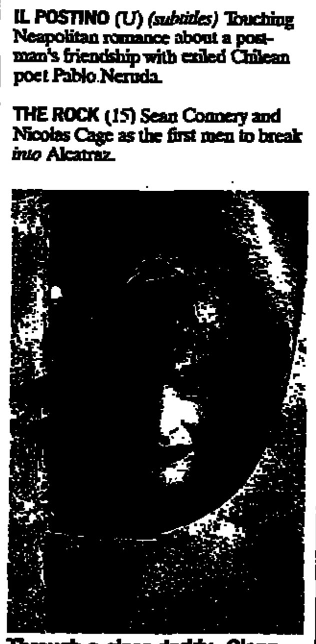
THE NUTTY PROFESSOR (12) Remake of the 1963 comedy classic sees Eddie Murphy as the fat professor who invents a potion to make him into a lithe lothario.

101 DALMATIANS (U) Writer John Hughes introduces some *Home Alone* motifs into this live-action remake of Disney's 1961 animation. Sharp design and a wonderful pantomime villain in Glenn Close's Cruella De Vil, compensate for what is otherwise a redundant exercise.

THE PILLOW BOOK (18) Eroticism and calligraphy from Peter Greenaway, as the luminous Vivian Wu goes in search of things that make the heart beat faster.

IL POSTINO (U) *(subtitles)* Touching Neapolitan romance about a postman's friendship with exiled Chilean poet Pablo Neruda.

THE ROCK (15) Sean Connery and Nicolas Cage as the first men to break *into* Alcatraz.



Through a glass darkly: Glenn Close in '101 Dalmatians'

ROALD DAHL'S MATILDA (PG) Danny DeVito's adaptation of Dahl's novel is a cartoonish parable that pitches kids against a string of loathsome-looking and unsympathetic grown-ups. Mara Wilson gives a sweet performance as the precocious Matilda, and director/narrator DeVito also puts in an appearance as one of Matilda's brutish parents.

SECRETS AND LIES (15) Mike Leigh's compassionate family saga about a young woman trying to trace her birth mother.

STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT (12) The eighth *Trek* movie dispenses with the old crew and drafts in impressive *Aliens*-inspired set design and photography. Captain Picard's battle against the Borg is played with darkness and humour.

STEAL BIG, STEAL LITTLE (12) Over-long mess of a movie with Andy Garcia giving two bad performances as a pair of identical twins.

STEALING BEAUTY (15) Liv Tyler plays a girl trying to lose her virginity and find her father in the latest lyrical film from Bertolluci.

STRIPTEASE (15) Risible comic thriller, with Demi Moore as the single-mum stripper who catches the eye of Congressman Burt Reynolds.

A SUMMER'S TALE (U) *(subtitles)* Eric Rohmer's beautifully measured study of the tangled love-affairs of a holidaying graduate.

A TIME TO KILL (15) Sandra Bullock and Samuel L Jackson emote for their lives in John Grisham's race thriller.

TIN CUP (15) Kevin Costner is unusually appealing as a gifted but self-destructive golfer romancing Renee Russo's dippy psychiatrist.

TOUCH OF EVIL (12) Orson Welles directed and starred in this classic *noir* thriller.

TRAINSPOTTING (18) Danny Boyle directs Welsh's blistering portrait of junkie camaraderie.

TRUE BLUE (15) Dull tale of the Oxford University boat-race mutiny.

TWELFTH NIGHT (U) Redundant, uncinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's play by theatre director, Trevor Nunn.

TWO DAYS IN THE VALLEY (18) Slick, self-regarding comedy *noir* set in LA, with James Spader.

TWO MUCH (PG) Sloppy, inconsequential comedy with Melanie Griffith embarrassingly stilted as Daryl Hannah's sister, and Antonio Banderas as the duplicitous art dealer romancing them both.

THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG (PG) Catherine Deneuve discovers she's pregnant by her garage mechanic boyfriend in Jacques Demy's 1964 charmer. Freshly restored and re-released.

THE VAN (15) Final, least satisfying and most ingratiating of the adaptations of Doyle's Dublin trilogy.

WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY (15) *(subtitles)* A lost cat triggers this delicious tale of love, loneliness and community.

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS (PG) In the hands of director Terry Jones Grahame's pastoral classic becomes a clumsy fable about Thatcherism.

The eye

West End

101 Dalmatians (U)
Virgin Fulham Road Sat-Tue 1.20pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.30pm (not Tue); Thu 2.20pm, 5.30pm, 8.20pm
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue/Thu 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue), 11.10pm (Sat)
Virgin Chelsea Sat-Tue 12.30pm, 2.35pm, 4.55pm, 7.15pm, 9.35pm (not Tue)
Clapham Picture House Sat/Sun 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm
Barbican Sat-Mon/Thu 3pm, 6pm, 8.30pm
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 11.45am, 2.10pm, 4.40pm, 7.10pm (not Tue), 9.40pm (not Tue), 12.10am (Sat)
UCI Whiteleys Sat-Tue 11am, 11.35am, 1.15pm, 2pm, 3.45pm, 4.30pm, 6.15pm, 8.35pm (not Tue), 9.20pm (not Tue); Thu 12noon, 1.25pm, 2.20pm, 3.55pm, 4.45pm, 6.15pm, 7.05pm, 8.35pm, 9pm, 9.40pm
Screen on Baker Street Sat-Mon 2.20pm, 4.35pm, 6.45pm, 8.55pm
Ritzy Sat-Tue/Thu 11.15am (Sat-Tue), 1.30pm, 3.45pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.15pm (not Tue)
Odeon Leicester Square Sat-Tue/Thu 12.45pm, 3.25pm, 6.05pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue)
Acts Of Love (18)
ABC Piccadilly (Formerly MGM) Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 4pm, 6pm, 8.30pm (not Tue)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 12.10pm, 2.30pm, 5pm, 7.20pm (not Tue), 9.40pm (not Tue); Thu 5.10pm, 9.40pm
Antonia's Line (15)
ABC Swiss Centre Sat-Tue 4pm, 8.50pm (not Tue)
L'Avventura (PG)
Ritzy Sun 1.40pmDeserto Rosso 4.15pm
Beautiful Girls (15)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 4.20pm, 7pm (not Tue), 9.40pm (not Tue), 12.30am (Sat)
Warner West End Sat-Tue/Thu 2pm, 4.20pm, 6.50pm, 9.15pm (not Tue)
Le Bonheur Est Dans Le Pre (15)
Curzon Phoenix Sat-Mon/Thu 1.30pm (not Sun), 3.45pm, 6.05pm, 8.20pm
ABC Swiss Centre Sat-Tue 1.25pm, 3.40pm, 5.55pm, 8.30pm (not Tue)
Brassed Off (15)
Odeon Mezzanine, Leicester Square Sat-Tue/Thu 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.20pm (not Tue)
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Mon 8.45pm, 11.10pm (Sat)
Virgin Haymarket Sat-Tue/Thu 1.10pm, 3.35pm, 6.05pm, 8.35pm (not Tue)
ABC Tottenham Court Road Sat-Tue 6.35pm, 9.10pm (not Tue)
Empire Leicester Square Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 9pm (not Tue), 11.30pm (Sat)
Breaking The Waves (18)
The Minema Sat-Mon/Thu 3pm, 8pm
ABC Shaftesbury Avenue Sat-Tue 1.25pm, 4.30pm, 7.45pm (not Tue)
The Craft (15)
Warner West End Sat/Sun 12.10am
Virgin Trocadero 7.05pm, 9.25pm (not Tue) 12midnight (Sat)
The Crow: City Of Angels (18)
Virgin Trocadero Sat 12midnight
Day Of The Beast (18)
Metro Sat-Mon 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm, 9pm
Daylight (12)
UCI Whiteleys Thu 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.35pm, 9.25pm
Virgin Chelsea Sun 7pm, 9.30pm
ABC Baker Street Sat/Sun 8.35pm
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Mon 6.10pm, 8.35pm (Sat/Sun), 11pm (Sat); Thu 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm
Virgin Trocadero Sat 12midnight; Sun 6.15pm, 9pm
ABC Tottenham Court Road Sat/Sun 9.15pm
Empire Leicester Square Sat 11.30pm; Sun 6.15pm; Thu 2pm, 4.30pm, 7pm, 9.30pm
The Day The Sun Turned Cold (Tianguo Niezi) (12)
ABC Swiss Centre Sat-Tue 3.50pm, 8.50pm (not Tue)
Dragonheart (PG)
Plaza Sat-Mon/Thu 1.20pm, 3.45pm, 6.10pm
Emma (U)
Odeon Mezzanine, Leicester Sq Sat-Tue/Thu 1pm, 3.35pm, 6.10pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue)
Evita (PG)
UCI Whiteleys Thu 6.05pm, 9pm
Odeon West End Sat-Tue/Thu 12.15pm, 1.45pm, 3.15pm, 4.45pm, 7.45pm (not Tue), 9.15pm (Sat-Mon), 10.45pm (Sat-Mon), 12.15am (Sat-Mon), 1.45am (Sat-Mon)
Odeon Kensington Thu 6.15pm, 9.15pm
Ritzy Thu 9pm
Swiss Cottage Odeon Thu 8.15pm
Virgin Fulham Road Thu 8pm
The Exorcist (18)
Virgin Trocadero Sat 12.30am
The Fan (15)
Odeon Mezzanine, Leicester Square Sat-Tue/Thu 3.35pm, 8.35pm (not Tue)
Fargo (18)
ABC Panton Street Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.25pm, 8.50pm (not Tue)
Fear (18)
Virgin Trocadero Sat 12midnight
The First Wives Club (PG)
Virgin Fulham Road Sat-Tue 1.40pm, 4pm, 6.40pm, 9.15pm (not Tue); Thu 2.30pm, 5.30pm, 8.30pm
Empire Leicester Sq Sat-Tue/Thu 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm (not Sun), 8.45pm (not Tue)
Virgin Trocadero 12.05pm, 2.25pm, 4.40pm (not Sun) 7pm (not Tue) 9.20pm (not Sun/Tue) 12midnight (Sat)
UCI Whiteleys Sat-Tue 7.25pm, 9.45pm (not Tue)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Mon/Thu 9.45pm, 12.15am (Sat)
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.15pm (not Tue), 8.50pm (Mon), 11.05pm (Sat)
Screen on Baker St Sat-Mon 2.30pm, 7pm
From Dusk Till Dawn (18)
Ritzy Sat 10.30pm
The Glimmer Man (18)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 11.50pm
A Goofy Movie (U)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 1.45pm
Home For The Holidays (15)
Curzon West End Sat-Mon/Thu 1.35pm (not Sun), 3.55pm, 6.15pm, 8.35pm
Screen on Baker St Sat-Mon 4.55pm, 9pm
Independence Day (12)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 3pm, 5.50pm, 8.50pm (not Tue), 11.40pm (Sat/Sun); Thu 2.20pm, 5.30pm, 8.50pm
Virgin Trocadero 12.05pm, 2.55pm, 5.50pm, 8.45pm (not Tue)
Odeon Mezzanine, Leicester Sq Sat-Tue/Thu 2.40pm, 5.30pm (not Tue), 8.25pm (not Tue)
I Shot Andy Warhol (18)
Renoir Sat-Mon 2pm, 4.10pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm
Virgin Haymarket Sat-Tue/Thu 1.05pm, 3.35pm, 6.05pm, 8.35pm (not Tue)
James And The Giant Peach (U)
ABC Tottenham Court Road Sat-Tue 1.45pm, 3.35pm
Jingle All The Way (PG)
Virgin Trocadero 12.10pm, 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.40pm, 9pm (not Tue)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 12.30pm, 2.40pm, 4.50pm, 7.10pm, 9.20pm (not Tue), 11.30pm (Sat/Sun); Thu 3.10pm, 5.10pm, 7.10pm, 9.20pm
Plaza Sat-Mon/Thu 2.20pm, 4.25pm, 6.30pm, 8.40pm
Odeon Mezzanine, Leics Sq Sat-Tue/Thu 1.20pm, 3.20pm, 5.45pm (not Tue), 8.25pm (not Tue)
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue 12.45pm, 2.45pm, 4.45pm, 6.45pm (not Tue); Thu 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.05pm
UCI Whiteleys Sat-Tue 11.45am, 1.50pm, 4pm, 6.35pm, 9pm (not Tue); Thu 11.40am, 1.45pm, 4.15pm, 6.20pm, 8.50pm
Virgin Chelsea Sat-Tue 12.35pm, 2.50pm, 4.55pm, 7pm
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 12.10pm, 2.25pm, 4.40pm, 7.25pm (not Tue)
Jude (15)
Odeon Mezzanine, Leicester Square Sat-Tue/Thu 1.05pm, 6.05pm (not Tue)
ABC Panton Street Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 6pm
Kansas City (15)
Chelsea Sat-Mon 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm
ABC Shaftesbury Avenue Sat-Tue 2.40pm, 5.50pm, 8.30pm (not Tue)
Last Of The High Kings (15)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 1.50pm, 6.20pm
ABC Tottenham Court Road Sat-Tue 1.40pm, 4.15pm, 6.40pm, 9.10pm (Mon)
Odeon Kensington Sat 12.05am
The Long Kiss Goodnight (18)
UCI Whiteleys Sat-Tue 6.55pm, 9.30pm (not Tue)
ABC Baker Street Sat-Tue 2.10pm, 5.10pm, 8.10pm (Mon)
Warner West End Sat-Tue/Thu 1.15pm (not Thu), 4pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm (not Tue), 12.15am (Sat/Sun)
Virgin Fulham Road Sat-Tue 1pm, 3.40pm, 6.20pm, 9pm (not Tue)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 3.50pm, 6.40pm (Sat-Mon), 9.30pm (not Tue), 12.25am (Sat)
Odeon Haymarket Sat-Tue/Thu 2pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.40pm (not Tue)
Virgin Trocadero 12.20pm, 3.05pm, 6pm, 8.50pm (not Tue) 12midnight (Sat)
Virgin Chelsea Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 3.55pm, 6.45pm (not Sun), 9.20pm (not Sun/Tue)
Ritzy Sat-Mon 1.25pm (not Sun), 3.55pm (not Sun), 6.25pm, 9.10pm, 11.40pm (Sat); Tue 1.25pm, 3.55pm; Thu 9.10pm
Gate Notting Hill Sat-Mon/Thu 1.30pm, 9pm, 11.30pm (Sat)
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue 3.30pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue), 11pm (Sat)
Lone Star (15)
ABC Piccadilly (Formerly MGM) Sat-Tue 2pm, 5.10pm, 8pm (not Tue)
Metro Sat-Mon 1.45pm, 5.30pm, 8.25pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda (PG)
UCI Whiteleys Sat-Tue 11.30am, 1.45pm, 4.15pm, 6.35pm, 9.05pm (not Tue); Thu 2.05pm, 4.30pm, 6.50pm, 9.10pm
Virgin Trocadero 12.05pm, 2.15pm, 4.20pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm (not Tue)
Virgin Chelsea Sat-Tue 12.30pm, 2.40pm, 4.50pm, 7.05pm, 9.20pm (not Tue)
Warner West End Sat-Tue/Thu 12.20pm (not Thu), 2.40pm, 4.50pm, 7pm, 9.10pm (not Tue), 11.30pm (Sat/Sun)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 2pm, 4.35pm, 7.05pm (not Tue), 9.35pm (Sat-Mon)
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 6.45pm (not Tue), 8.55pm (not Tue); Thu 1.25pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm
Clapham Picture House Sat/Sun 11.45am (Sat), 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm, 9pm
Ritzy Sat-Tue/Thu 11.50am (Sat-Tue), 1.55pm, 4pm, 6.05pm (not Tue), 8.05pm (not Tue)
Michael Collins (15)
Warner West End Sat-Tue/Thu 12.15pm (not Thu), 2.50pm, 5.40pm, 8.30pm (not Tue), 11.20pm (Sat/Sun)
Virgin Fulham Road Sat-Tue 12.20pm (Sat/Sun), 2.30pm (Mon/Tue), 6pm, 8.50pm (not Tue); Thu 2pm, 5pm
Virgin Haymarket Sat-Tue 1.35pm, 4.50pm, 8pm (not Tue)
A Midsummer Night's Dream (PG)
Minema Sat-Mon/Thu 6pm
Miracle On 34th Street (1994 Version) (U)
Ritzy Sat 10am
Mission: Impossible (PG)
Plaza Sat-Mon/Thu 5.40pm
The Nightmare Before Christmas (PG)
Ritzy Sat 10am
Nutty Professor (12)
Plaza Sat-Mon/Thu 1.50pm, 4.05pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm
The Pillow Book (18)
Lumiere Sat-Mon 12.50pm, 3.25pm, 6pm, 8.35pm
Virgin Chelsea Sat-Mon 9.10pm
Gate Notting Hill Sat-Mon/Thu 6.25pm
Il Postino (15)
ABC Swiss Centre Sat-Tue 1.25pm, 6.10pm
Secrets And Lies (15)
ABC Panton Street Sat-Tue 2pm, 5pm, 8pm (not Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact (12)
Plaza Sat-Mon/Thu 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.20pm, 8.50pm
ABC Baker Street Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 3.50pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm (not Tue)
Virgin Fulham Road Sat-Tue 1pm, 3.50pm, 6.45pm, 9.20pm (not Tue); Thu 2.10pm, 5.10pm, 8.10pm
Virgin Trocadero Sat 11.35am, 1.55pm, 4.20pm, 7pm, 9.35pm, 12.10am; Sun-Tue 1pm, 3.45pm, 6.30pm, 9.10pm (not Tue)
Clapham Picture House Sat/Sun 2.30pm, 4.45pm, 7pm, 9.15pm
Notting Hill Coronet Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.20pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue)
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue/Thu 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm (not Tue), 8.40pm (not Tue), 11.05pm (Sat)
UCI Whiteleys Sat-Tue 11.20am, 1pm, 2pm, 3.50pm, 4.25pm, 7pm (not Sun), 8.50pm (not Tue), 9.25pm (not Tue); Thu 1.40pm, 4.10pm, 6.45pm, 9.15pm
Empire Leicester Square Sat-Tue/Thu 10.45am (not Thu), 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm, 8.45pm (not Tue), 11.30pm (Sat)
ABC Tottenham Court Road Sat-Tue 1.35pm, 4.10pm, 6.40pm, 9.25pm (not Tue)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 1.30pm, 4.10pm, 6.50pm (not Tue), 9.30pm (not Tue), 12.10am (Sat)
Screen on the Green Sat-Mon 3.30pm, 6.20pm, 8.40pm
Ritzy Sat-Tue/Thu 11.40am (Sun/Mon), 2pm, 4.20pm, 6.40pm (not Tue), 9pm (Sat-Mon), 11.15pm (Sat)
Stealing Beauty (15)
ABC Panton Street Sat-Tue 3.40pm, 8.20pm (not Tue)
Steal Big Steal Little (12)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 12.35pm
Surviving Picasso (15)
UCI Whiteleys Thu 1pm, 3.40pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm
Warner West End Thu 3.15pm, 5.50pm, 8.40pm
Swiss Cottage Odeon Thu 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.30pm
Virgin Haymarket Thu 2.15pm, 5.10pm, 8pm
Virgin Fulham Rd Thu 1.50pm, 4.50pm, 7.50pm
Ritzy Thu 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.45pm
A Time To Kill (15)
Warner West End Sat-Tue/Thu 12noon (not Thu), 3pm, 6pm, 9pm (not Tue), 12.05am (Sat/Sun)
Twelfth Night (U)
ABC Swiss Centre Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 6.10pm
Two Much (PG)
Virgin Trocadero 12.40pm, 3.30pm
The Umbrellas Of Cherbourg (PG)
Richmond Filmhouse Sat-Mon/Thu 3pm, 5.30pm, 8pm
Barbican Sat-Mon/Thu 3pm, 6.15pm, 8.40pm
Curzon Mayfair Sat-Mon/Thu 1.45pm (not Sun), 4pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm
Screen on the Hill Sat-Mon 3pm, 5pm, 7.05pm, 9.05pm
The Van (15)
ABC Panton Street Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 3.30pm, 5.45pm, 8.15pm (not Tue)
Warner West End Sat-Tue 4.10pm, 8.40pm (not Tue), 11pm (Sat/Sun); Thu 2.30pm, 7.30pm
When The Cat's Away (15)
Renoir Sat-Mon 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm, 9pm
Ritzy Sat-Tue/Thu 1.45pm, 3.30pm, 5.15pm (not Tue), 7pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (Sat-Mon)
ABC Swiss Centre Sat-Tue 1.40pm, 3.40pm, 6pm, 8.30pm (not Tue)
Gate Notting Hill Sat-Mon/Thu 4pm
The Wind In The Willows (PG)
Odeon Kensington Sat-Tue/Thu 2.15pm
Swiss Cottage Odeon Sat-Tue 1.20pm

London reps

EVERYMAN
Hollybush Lane, NW3 (0171-435 1525)
Saturday 21 **La Dolce Vita** (18) 2.15pm, 8pm + **Eight and a Half** (15) 5.30pm Sunday 22 **In A Lonely Place** (PG) 1.45pm + **The Big Heat** 3.30pm **Fallen Angels (Duoluo Tianshi)** (18) 5.15pm, 9pm + **Days of Being Wild** (15) 7.15pm Monday 23 **Dekalog 8** (PG) 12.45pm, 7.10pm **Dekalog 6** 4.40pm **Dekalog 9** (PG) 2pm, 8.25pm **Dekalog 10** (PG) 3.15pm, 9.40pm **Dekalog 7** (PG) 5.55pm Thursday 26 **Fanny and Alexander** (15) 2.30pm **The Man Who Knew Too Much** [1934 version] 6.20pm + **North By Northwest** (PG) 8.30pm Friday 27 **Horse Feathers** (U) 2pm, 6.30pm **Animal Crackers** 3.15pm, 7.50pm + **Duck Soup** 5pm, 9.35pm

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE
South Bank, SE1 (0171-633 0274)
Saturday 21 **The Hunchback Of Notre Dame** (U) 4pm **The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Charles Laughton version)** (PG) 7.30pm **White Christmas** (U)6.10pm **Heslop, Parker, Lahire, Thew: Shorts 3** 8.30pm Sunday 22 **The Remains Of The Day** (U) 3.10pm **Independence Day** (12) 5.45pm **Under Your Spell** 6.15pm **While You Were Sleeping** (PG) 7.30pm **It's A Wonderful Life** (12) 8.30pm **Years of Hunger (Hungerjahre)** 8.40pm **The Hunchback Of Notre Dame** (U) 4pm Monday 23 **Independence Day** (12) 2.30pm, 8.30pm **It's A Wonderful Life** (12) 6pm **Farewell Again** 6.15pm **The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Charles Laughton version)** (PG) 8.40pm Friday 27 **The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Charles Laughton version)** (PG) 6.15pm **These Foolish Things** (PG) 2.30pm **Independence Day** (12) 6pm **Holiday Inn** (U) 7.30pm **August** (PG) 8.40pm **The Cuenca Crime (El Crimen de Cuenca)** 8.45pm

PHOENIX CINEMA
High Road, N2 (0181-444 6789)
Saturday 21 **Emma** (U) 2.20pm, 4.40pm, 7pm, 9.20pm Sunday 22 **Brassed Off** (15) Sun, Fri 6.50pm, 9pm; also Mon 2.30pm, 4.40pm, 6.50pm, 9pm Thursday 26 **Lone Star** (15) 5.25pm Friday 27 **Brassed Off** (15) 6.50pm, 9pm

PRINCE CHARLES
Leicester Place, WC2 (0171-437 8181)
Saturday 21 **The Truth About Cats And Dogs** (15) 1.30pm **Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas** (PG) 3.30pm **Fear** (18) 5.30pm **Trainspotting** (18) 8pm **From Dusk Till Dawn** (18) 10pm Sunday 22 **American Buffalo** (15) 1.30pm **Jude** (15) 6.30pm **Fargo** (18) 9pm Monday 23 **Jude** (15) 1.30pm **American Buffalo** (15) 4pm **Tin Cup** (15) 6.15pm **Chain Reaction** (12) 9pm Tuesday 24 **Two Days In The Valley** (18) 1.30pm **Braveheart** (15) 2.30pm **Fear** (18) 4pm Thursday 26 **Trainspotting** (18) 6pm **Sense And Sensibility** (U) 8pm Friday 27 **Rocky Horror Picture Show** (15) 11.30pm

RIO CINEMA
Kingsland High Street, E8 (0171-254 6677)
Saturday 21 **Santa Clause** (U) 11am **From Dusk Till Dawn/Four Rooms** (18) 11.15pm **101 Dalmatians** (U) Sat-Sun, Fri 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.45pm; also Tue 2pm, 4.15pm

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS CINEMA
Crisp Rd, W6 (0181-741 2255/cc 420 0100)
Saturday 21 **Persuasion** (U) 6.30pm + **Emma** (U) 8.40pm Sunday 22 **Wings Of Desire** (15) 5.30pm + **Faraway, So Close** (15) 8pm Monday 23 **Little Women** (U) 6.15pm + **Sense & Sensibility** 8.40pm Friday 27 **Annie Hall** (PG) 6.45pm + **Manhattan** 8.40pm

London locals

ACTON
WARNER VILLAGE
(0181-896 0066) ⊖ Park Royal
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 10.30am (Sat/Sun/Tue), 11.30am (Sat/Sun/Tue), 1pm, 2pm, 3.30pm, 4.30pm, 6pm, 7pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue), 9.30pm (not Tue), 12midnight (Sat); Thu 12.30pm, 1pm, 3.20pm, 3.30pm, 6pm, 8.30pm, 9.10pm
The Adventures Of Pinocchio Sat-Tue 12noon (Sat/Sun), 2.10pm, 4.20pm
Daylight Sat/Sun 6.50pm, 9.40pm, 11.45pm; Thu 1.20pm, 4.10pm, 6.50pm, 9.30pm
Evita Thu 6.05pm, 9.05pm
The First Wives Club Sat-Tue 6.05pm, 9.10pm (not Tue)
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 10.40am, 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (Tue), 9.10pm (not Tue); Thu 12.50pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 1.35pm, 4.05pm, 6.40pm, 9.20pm (not Tue), 11.55pm (Sat); Thu 1.45pm, 4.20pm, 7.20pm, 9.50pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue 10.40am, 1.20pm, 3.50pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm (not Tue); Thu 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.20pm, 8.50pm
The Santa Clause Sat 10.30am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 11am, 11.40am, 1.30pm, 2.10pm, 4pm, 4.40pm, 6.30pm, 7.20pm (not Tue), 9pm (not Tue), 9.50pm (not Tue), 11.45pm (Sat); Thu 1.10pm, 2.10pm, 3.50pm, 4.40pm, 6.40pm, 7.10pm, 9.20pm, 9.40pm

BARKING
ODEON
(0181-507 8444) ⊖ Barking
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 11.15am (not Sun), 12.35pm, 1.35pm, 3.05pm, 4.05pm, 5.25pm (not Tue), 6.25pm (not Tue), 7.45pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue)
Daylight Sat/Sun late 8.55pm
Dracula: Dead And Loving It Sat/Sun 1.20pm, 3.10pm
A Goofy Movie Sat/Mon/Tue 10.55am
Jack Sat/Mon/Tue 1pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue/Thu 12.40pm, 2.45pm, 4.55pm, 7pm, 9pm (Mon)
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 1.10pm (not Sat/Sun), 3.40pm (not Sat/Sun), 6.05pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Mon 10.05am (not Sun), 12.10pm, 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.40, 8.50pm (not Tue); Tue 10.05am, 12.10pm, 2.20pm, 4.30pm; Thu 2.25pm, 4.35pm, 6.45pm
The Santa Clause Sat/Mon/Tue 11.05am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 1pm, 3.35pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.35pm (not Tue)

BROMLEY
ODEON
(0181-315 4211) BR: Bromley North/South
101 Dalmatians Sat 11.35am, 2pm, 4.30pm, 7.05pm, 9.50pm; Sun-Tue 1pm, 3.35pm, 6.10pm (not Tue), 8.50pm (not Tue); Thu 2.55pm, 6.10pm, 8.50pm
Evita Thu 5.50pm, 8.30pm
Jingle All The Way Sat 1.10pm, 3.20pm, 5.30pm; Sun-Tue 12.30pm, 2.35pm, 4.35pm, 6.40pm (not Tue); Thu 2.10pm, 4.10pm
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat 7.35pm, 9.55pm; Sun/Mon 8.45pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat 12.10pm, 2.35pm, 5pm, 7.25pm, 9.50pm; Sun-Tue 11.45pm (not Sun), 2.05pm, 4.25pm, 6.45pm (not Tue), 9.25pm (not Tue);
Star Trek: First Contact Sat 11.50am, 2.25pm, 5pm, 7.25pm, 9.50pm; Sun-Tue 12.45pm, 3.25pm, 6.05pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue); Thu 2.20pm, 4.35pm, 6.50pm, 9.05pm

CROYDON
CROYDON CLOCKTOWER
(0181-253 1030) BR: Croydon West/East
Emma Sun 3pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 11am (not Sat), 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm (not Tue)
Roald Dahl's Matilda 11am (not Wed), 1pm, 3pm (not Sun), 5pm, 7pm (not Tue/Wed)

SAFARI
(0181-970 6038) BR: West Croydon
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 10.40am (Sat), 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm (not Tue), 8.40pm (not Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 10.10am (Sat), 12.40pm, 3.10pm, 5.50pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue)

CROYDON WARNER
(0181-680 6881) BR: East Croydon
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 10.30am, 11am, 12.50pm, 1.30pm, 3.20pm, 3.50pm, 5.50pm, 6.10pm, 8.20pm, 8.40pm, 10.50pm (Sat), 11pm (Sat); Thu 1pm, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 4pm, 6pm, 6.40pm, 8.30pm, 9.15pm
The Adventures Of Pinocchio Sat-Tue 12noon, 2.10pm
The Craft Sat 11.20pm
Daylight Sat/Sun 7pm, 9.25pm, 12midnight; Thu 1pm, 3.40pm, 6.20pm, 9pm
Evita Thu 6.30pm, 9.05pm
The First Wives Club Sat-Tue 4.30pm, 7pm (not Sat/Sun), 9.25pm (not Sat/Sun)
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 1pm, 3.45pm, 6.40pm, 9.15pm, 11.55pm (Sat)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 11.30am (Sat-Tue), 1.40pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 8.40pm, 11pm (Sat)
The Santa Clause Sat 10.30am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 10.55am (Sun-Tue), 1.30pm, 3.55pm, 6.25pm, 9pm, 11.30pm (Sat); Thu 1.05pm, 3.35pm, 6.10pm, 8.45pm

EALING
ABC NORTHFIELDS AVENUE
(0181-567 1075) BR/⊖ Ealing Broadway
The Adventures Of Pinocchio Sat-Tue 1.45pm, 4pm
The First Wives Club Sat-Tue 6.15pm, 8.45pm
The Hunchback Of Notre Dame Sat/Sun 1.45pm, 4pm
Independence Day Sat-Tue 8pm

EALING VIRGIN UXBRIDGE ROAD
(0181-235 3003) BR/⊖ Ealing Broadway
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 11.50am, 2.10pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm, 9pm (not Tue)
Daylight Sat/Sun 9.15pm, 11.35pm (Sat)
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 12.30pm, 2.40pm, 5pm, 7.15pm, 9.30pm (not Tue)
The Santa Clause Sat10
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 12pm, 2.20pm, 4.40pm, 7pm, 9.20pm (not Tue)

EDGWARE
EDGWARE BELLE-VUE
(0181-381 2558) ⊖ Edgware
101 Dalmatians 12.20pm, 2.30pm, 5.20pm, 8.15pm (not Tue)
The First Wives Club 12.15pm, 2.15pm (not Sun)
Star Trek: First Contact 12.10pm, 2.40pm, 5.20pm (not Sun), 8.10pm (not Tue)
Dastak, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, Raja Hindustani Please phone for times

EDMONTON
LEE VALLEY UCI 12
(0181-482 5282) ⊖ Tottenham Hale
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 10.25am, 11am, 11.40am, 1pm, 1.45pm, 2.15pm, 3.45pm, 4.20pm, 5pm, 6.25pm, 7pm, 7.40pm (not Tue), 8.50pm (not Tue), 9.40pm (not Tue), 10.10pm (not Tue), 11.30pm (Sat); Thu 1pm, 1.30pm, 1.55pm, 3.40pm, 4.15pm, 4.45pm, 6.20pm, 7pm, 7.30pm, 8.50pm, 9.45pm
Daylight Sat/Sun 8.50pm, 9.20pm, 11.55pm (Sat); Thu 1.20pm, 2pm, 4.05pm, 4.35pm, 6.50pm, 7.15pm, 9.35pm, 10pm
Dragonheart Sat-Tue 11.10am, 2pm, 4.30pm
Evita Thu 6pm, 7.20pm, 9.05pm, 10.10pm
Fear Sat 12.10am
The First Wives Club Sat-Mon 9.10pm, 11.45pm (Sat)
Gathek Mon 9.20pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 10.35am, 1.20pm, 4pm, 6.40pm, 9pm (not Tue), 11.15pm (Sat); Thu 1.10pm, 3.50pm, 6.30pm, 9pm
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 7.10pm, 9.50pm (not Tue), 12.30am (Sat)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue 10.15am, 12.40pm, 3.30pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm (not Thu), 11pm (not Tue); Thu 12.40pm, 3.30pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm
The Nutty Professor Sat-Mon 10.20pm, 12.45am (Sat)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 10.45am, 11.20am, 1.30pm, 2pm, 4.10pm, 4.40pm, 6.50pm, 7.20pm, 9.30pm (not Tue), 10pm (not Tue), 12midnight (Sat) 12.30am, (Sat); Thu 1.40pm, 4.25pm, 7.05pm, 9.20pm, 9.50pm

FINCHLEY
WARNER
(0181-446 9977) ⊖ East Finchley
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 10.45am, 11.15am, 1pm, 1.45pm, 3.40pm, 4.15pm, 6.15pm, 8.45pm, 9.15pm; Thu 12.40pm, Thu 12.40pm, 1.20pm, 3.30pm, 4pm, 6.10pm, 6.40pm, 8.45pm, 9.10pm, 11.50pm (Sat)
The Adventures Of Pinocchio Sat-Tue 11.45am, 2.10pm
Daylight Sat/Sun 7.05pm, 9.40pm, 12.10am (Sat); Thu 1.30pm, 4.10pm, 6.50pm, 9.30pm
First Wives Club Sat 4.35pm; Sun-Tue/Thu 4.35pm, 7.10pm, 9.50pm, 12.10am (Sat)
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue/Thu 10.50am, 1pm, 3.15pm, 5.30pm, 7.45pm, 10pm
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 1.25pm, 4.05pm, 7pm, 9.45pm, 12.15am (Sat)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue 11.05am, 1.35pm, 4pm, 6.30pm, 9pm; Thu 1.10pm, 3.50pm, 6.20pm, 9pm
The Santa Clause Sat 10.30am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 10.40am, 1.15pm, 3.50pm, 6.40pm, 9.25pm, 12midnight (Sat); Thu 1.40pm, 4.20pm, 7pm, 9.45pm

GREENWICH
CINEMA
(0142-6919020) BR: Greenwich
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue/Thu 1.30pm, 3.55pm, 6.20pm, 8.40pm (not Tue)
Dragonheart 2.15pm (not Wed)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 12.35pm (Tue), 2.35pm (not Thu) 4.45pm, 6.55pm (not Tue), 9.05pm (not Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue/Thu 4.15pm, 6.35pm (not Tue), 8.55pm (not Tue)

HAMPSTEAD
MGM
(0181-794 4000) ⊖ Belsize Park
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 3.40pm, 6.05pm, 8.30pm
Daylight Sat/Sun 8.15pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 1.45pm, 4pm, 6pm, 8.15pm (not Sat/Sun)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 1.25pm, 3.50pm, 6.15pm, 8.40pm

HAMMERSMITH
VIRGIN
(0181-748 0557) ⊖ Ravenscourt Pk/H'smith
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 11am (Sat), 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm (not Tue)
Daylight Sat 8.45pm, 11.30pm; Sun 8.45pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.10pm
The Long Kiss Goodnight Mon 8.30pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue 11.20am (Sat), 1.40pm, 4.10pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm (not Tue)
The Santa Clause Sat10am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 1pm, 3.50pm, 6.30pm, 9.10pm (not Tue), 11.30pm (Sat)

HARROW
WARNER
(0181-427 9944) ⊖ Harrow on the Hill
101 Dalmatians Sat-Mon 10.50am (Sat) 12.05pm, 1.10pm, 2.25pm, 3.40pm, 4.45pm, 6pm, 7.10pm, 8.30pm, 9.30pm, 11pm (Sat); Tue 11.40am, 1pm, 2.20pm, 2.30pm, 3.20pm, 4.40pm, 5.40pm; Thu 2.10pm, 3.40pm, 4.35pm, 6pm, 7.10pm, 8.30pm, 9.30pm
The Adventures Of Pinocchio Sat/Sun 2.15pm; Tue 3pm
The Craft Sat 11.40pm
Daylight Sat/Sun 7pm, 9.20pm, 11.40pm (Sat); Thu 3pm, 6.20pm, 9pm
Evita Thu 6.45pm, 9.20pm
The First Wives Club Sat-Mon/Thu 11.55am, 2.15pm (not Sat/Sun) 4.35pm, 7pm (not Sat/Sun) 9.20pm (not Sat/Sun); Tue 12.20pm, 5.30pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Mon 11.30am 1.40pm, 3.50pm, 6.10pm, 9.10pm, 11.20pm (Sat); Tue 12.30pm, 2.50pm, 5.20pm; Thu 2pm, 4.20pm, 6.30pm, 8.50
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Mon 12.0pm, 4.10pm, 6.40pm, 9.50pm; Tue 11.50am, 2.30pm, 6pm; Thu 4pm, 7pm, 9.40pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Mon 10.40am (Sat) 12.55pm, 3.25pm, 6.20pm, 8.45pm, 11.10pm (Sat); Tue 11.25am, 2.05pm, 4.55pm; Thu 3.30pm, 5.50pm, 8.40pm
The Santa Clause Sat 10.30pm
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Mon 11.20am (Sun-Mon) 1.30pm, 1.50pm, 4pm, 4.20pm, 6.30pm, 6.50pm, 9pm, 9.40pm, 11.30pm (Sat); Tue 12.10pm, 12.40pm, 2.40pm, 3.10pm, 5.10pm, 5.50pm; Thu 2.20pm, 3.20pm, 4.50pm, 6.10pm, 7.20pm, 9.10pm, 9.50pm

KINGSTON
OPTIONS
(0181-546 0404) BR: Kingston
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 1.10pm, 3.35pm, 6pm, 8.25pm (not Tue)
Daylight Sat 8.20pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 1.35pm, 3.50pm, 6.05pm, 8.20pm (not Sat/Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 12.40pm, 3.15pm, 5.50pm, 8.25pm (not Tue)

PECKHAM
PREMIER CINEMA
(0181-730 1010) BR: Peckham Rye
101 Dalmatians Mon-Tue/Thu 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.20pm (not Tue), 8.40pm (not Tue)
Daylight Sat 9pm
First Wives Club Sat-Tue/Thu 2pm, 4.20pm, 6.35pm (not Tue), 8.50pm (not Tue)
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue/Thu 12noon, 2.15pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm (not Tue), 9pm (not Sat/Tue)
Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue/Thu 3.45pm, 6.15pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 12.10pm, 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.30pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue/Thu 2.10pm, 4.25pm, 6.40pm (not Tue), 8.55pm (not Tue)
Wind In The Willows 1.45pm (not Wed)

PUTNEY
ABC
(0181-788 3003) ⊖ Putney Bridge
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm, 8.40pm
Daylight Sat 8.15pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 1.45pm, 4pm, 6.15pm, 9pm (not Sat)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 1.20pm, 3.40pm, 6.15pm, 8.50pm

RICHMOND
ODEON
(0181-315 4218) BR/⊖ Richmond
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue/Thu 1.15pm, 4pm, 6.45pm (not Tue), 9.30pm (not Tue)
Daylight Thu 2pm, 5.45pm, 8.30pm
Evita Thu 6.10pm, 8.50pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 1.30pm, 3.50pm, 6.30pm (not Tue), 9.20pm (not Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue/Thu 1pm, 3.40pm, 6.30pm (not Tue), 9.10pm (not Tue)

ODEON STUDIO
(0181-332 0055) BR/⊖ Richmond
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue/Thu 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm (not Tue), 9.10pm (not Tue)
Brassed Off Sat-Tue/Thu 9.15pm (not Tue)
Daylight Sat/Sun 6.30pm, 9.30pm
The First Wives Club Sat-Tue/Thu 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.30pm (not Tue), 9.30pm (not Tue)
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue/Thu 2pm, 4.10pm, 7pm (not Tue)
Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue/Thu 1pm, 3.45pm, 6.25pm (not Tue), 9.10pm (not Tue)

ROMFORD
ABC
(01708-743848) BR: Romford
101 Dalmatians Sat-Mon 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6pm, 8.25pm; Tue 12.15pm, 2.35pm, 4.50pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Mon 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 5.45pm, 8.45pm (not Sat); Tue 12.10pm, 2.15pm, 4.20pm
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Mon 12.55pm, 3.25pm, 5.55pm, 8.35pm; Tue 12.05pm, 2.25pm, 4.45pm

ROMFORD ODEON LIBERTY 2
(01708-729040) BR: Romford
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 11.30am, 12.45pm, 1.45pm, 3.15pm, 4.15pm, 5.40pm (not Tue), 6.40pm (not Tue), 8pm (not Tue), 9pm (not Tue); Thu 2.20pm, 2.45pm, 4.40pm, 5.15pm, 7.45pm
The Craft Sat/Sun 3.50pm; Mon 3.50pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm; Tue 3.50pm
Daylight Sat 7.15pm, 9.45pm; Sun 6.15pm, 8.45pm; Thu 2.45pm, 5.05pm, 7.25pm
Dracula: Dead & Loving It Sat-Tue 1.20pm
Dragonheart Sat 11.05am
Evita Thu 7pm
The First Wives Club Sat 1.15pm, 3.45pm, 7.20pm, 9.40pm; Sun-Tue 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue); Thu 2.40pm, 5pm, 7.30pm
A Goofy Movie Sat 11.05am
Jack Sat 11.05am
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 11.15am, 1.20pm, 3.30pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.40pm (not Tue); Thu 2.30pm, 5pm, 7.30pm
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat 1.20pm, 4pm, 6.45pm, 9.30pm; Sun-Mon 12.50pm, 3.20pm, 5.55pm, 8.30pm; Tue 12.50pm, 3.20pm; Thu 2.10pm, 4.45pm, 7.15pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue 11.15am, 1.30pm, 3.50pm, 6.15pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue); Thu 2.45pm, 5.05pm, 7.25pm
The Nutty Professor Sat 11.05am
The Santa Clause Sat 11.05am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat 1.30pm, 4.30pm, 7pm, 9.30pm; Sun-Mon 1pm, 3.35pm, 6.10pm, 8.40pm; Tue 1pm, 3.35pm; Thu 2.15pm, 4.45pm, 7.15pm

STREATHAM
ABC
(0181-769 1928) BR: Streatham Hill
Alaska Sat/Sun 12.45pm, 3.10pm
Daylight Sat-Tue 5.20pm (Sun), 8.15pm (Sat/Sun)
The First Wives Club Sat-Tue 5.40pm, 8.20pm (not Tue)
Independence Day Sat-Tue 1.15pm, 4.30pm (not Sun), 7.45pm (not Sat/Sun/Tue)
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 12.55pm, 3.25pm, 6pm, 8.35pm (not Tue)

ODEON
(0181-315 4219) BR: Streatham Hill
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 12.05 2.15pm, 4.25pm, 6.35pm 9not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue); Thu 1.05pm, 3.25pm, 6.35pm, 8.45pm
Brassed Off Sat-Tue 1.20pm, 6pm (not Tue); Thu 1.20pm
The Craft Sat-Tue 3.30pm, 8.30pm (not Tue); Thu 3.30pm
Evita Thu 5.55pm, 6.30pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue/Thu 12.40pm, 2.50pm, 4.55pm (not Tue), 7pm (not Tue), 9.05pm (not Tue)
Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 12.30pm, 3.10pm, 5.50pm (not Thu), 8.30pm (not Tue); Thu 12.30pm, 3.10pm, 5.50pm, 8.30pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 12.25pm, 2.35pm, 4.45pm, 6.55pm (not Tue), 9pm (not tue)

UXBRIDGE
ODEON
(01426-931395) ⊖ Uxbridge
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue/Thu 11.10am (not Tue), 1.30pm, 3.55pm, 6.25pm, (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue/Thu)
Evita Thu 8.25pm
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Tue/Thu 11.40am (not Thu), 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.40pm, 8.50pm (not Tue)

WALTHAMSTOW
ABC
(0181-520 7092) ⊖ Walthamstow Central
101 Dalmatians Sat-Mon 1.40pm, 3.55pm, 6.10pm, 8.35pm; Tue 12.10pm, 2.30pm, 4.45pm
Daylight Sat 8.30pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Mon 2.10pm, 4.30pm, 6.30pm, 8.40pm (not Sat); Tue 12.40pm, 2.40pm, 4.40pm
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Mon 1.10pm, 3.30pm, 5.50pm, 8.20pm; Tue 12.05pm, 2.25pm, 4.45pm

WIMBLEDON
ODEON
(01426-919227) BR/⊖ Wimbledon
101 Dalmatians Sat-Tue 11am, 1.25pm, 3.55pm, 6.20pm (not Tue), 8.45pm (not Tue), 11.15pm (Sat)
Daylight Sat 6pm, 8.30pm, 11.15pm; Sun 6pm, 8.30pm
Dracula: Dead And Loving It Sat-Tue 11.05am, 1.10pm
The First Wives Club Mon 8.45pm
The Glimmer Man Sat 11.30pm
Jingle All The Way Sat-Tue 11.55am, 1.55pm, 3.55pm, 5.55pm (not Sat/Sun/Tue)
The Long Kiss Goodnight Sat-Tue 3.05pm, 5.45pm (not Tue), 8.25pm (not Tue), 11.10pm (Sat)
Roald Dahl's Matilda Sat-Mon 11.30am, 1.45pm, 4pm, 6.15pm, 8.30pm; Tue 11.30am, 1.45pm, 4pm
The Santa Clause Sat 10am
Star Trek: First Contact Sat-Tue 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm (not Tue), 8.30pm (not Tue), 11.15pm (Sat)
Twister Sat 10am

Christmas guide to church services & events 21-27 December

These are the church services for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day:

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10am Matins, Ireland in F; 11am Sung Eucharist, Missa brevis in B flat (Mozart), The Archbishop; 3.15pm Evensong, Howells in G.

YORK MINSTER: 24 Dec: 4pm Nine Lessons and Carols. 25 Dec: 8am, 8.45am HC; 10am Sung Eucharist, Missa brevis (Mozart), The Archbishop; *11.30am Matins, Britten in E* and C, The Dean; 4pm Evensong, St Paul's service (Howells).

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Missa verbum coro (Jeffcoat), The Provost. 25 Dec: 9am Morning Prayer; 9.15am HC; 11am Choral Eucharist, Kelly in C, The Right Rev Mark Santer; 4pm Evening Prayer.

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist. Mass of the quiet hour (Oldroyd), Canon David Galilee. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 9.15pm Choral Matins; 10.30am Cathedral Eucharist. St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop.

BRADFORD CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm First Communion of Christmas. In the bleak mid-winter (Darke), The Provost. 25 Dec: *8am HC; 10.15am* HC, The Bishop.

BURY ST EDMUNDS, St Edmundsbury Cathedral: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Sung Eucharist, Oldroyd in D. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10am Sung Eucharist, Mozart in C, The Bishop of Dunwich; 11.45am HC; 5pm Choral Evensong, Blow in F transposed.

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Canon David Weston. 25 Dec: 10.30am Sung Eucharist, Stanford in C and F, The Dean; 4pm Evensong.

CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Missa ad praesepe (Malcolm), The Acting Provost. 25 Dec: 7.30am Morning Prayer; 8am HC; 9.30am Eucharist, Canon David Knight; 11am Service for Christmas Morning, Stanford in C, The Bishop; 12.10pm HC; 5.15pm Evening Prayer.

CHESTER CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Canon James Newcome. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10am Choral Eucharist, The Bishop of Birkenhead; 11.30am Christmas Matins, The Dean; 4.15pm Choral Evensong with Carols.

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL: 25 Dec: 7.40am Morning Prayer; 8am Communion; 10.30am Cathedral Eucharist, Missa brevis Sancti Joannis de Deo (Haydn); 3.30pm Evening Prayer at the Crib.

DERBY CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm First Eucharist of Christmas, Ireland in C, Canon Tony Chesterman. 25 Dec: 10.45am Sung Eucharist with Carols, Stanford in G, The Bishop.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL: 25 Dec: 7.15am HC, The Precentor; 8am HC, Canon Derek Hodgson; 10am Matins, Vaughan Williams in G, The Dean; 11.15am HC, Messe de minuit (Charpentier), The Bishop; 3.30pm Evensong, Collegium regale (Howells).

ELY CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm First Eucharist of Christmas, Little organ mass (Mozart), The Dean. 25 Dec: *8.15am HC, Canon Dennis Green*; 10.30am Sung Eucharist, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Canon John Inge; 3.45pm Evensong, Jesus College service (Mathias).

GUILDFORD CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.45pm Midnight Eucharist, Dixit Maria mass (Hassler), The Sub-Dean. 25 Dec: 8am HC, Canon Dr Maureen Palmer; 9.45am Sung Eucahrist, Missa brevis in C (Mozart), The Bishop; 11.15am Matins, Stanford in B flat, The Dean; 4pm Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.

LEICESTER CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Sung Eucharist, Missa brevis in C (Mozart), The Bishop. 25 Dec: 7.40am Morning Prayer; 8am HC; 10.30am Choral Matins, On this day earth shall ring (Stewart), The Provost.

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Schubert in G, The Rev Alan Smith. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10.30am Sung Eucharist, Schubert in G, The Bishop; 5.30pm Evening Prayer.

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist and Blessing of the Crib, The Chancellor. 25 Dec: 8am HC with Carols and Station at the Crib; 9.30am Sung Eucharist, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), The Bishop; 11.15am Matins, Stanford in B flat, The Dean; 12.30pm HC; 3.45pm HC, Collegium regale (Howells).

MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm First Communion of Christmas, The Bishop. 25 Dec: 8.45am Morning Prayer; 9am HC; 10.30am Sung Eucharist, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), The Dean.

NEWCASTLE CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Blessing of the Crib and First Eucharist of Christmas, Missa Sancti Joannis de Deo (Haydn), The Provost. 25 Dec: 8am HC, Canon Bob Langley; 9.30am Sung Eucharist, Missa ad praesepe (Malcolm).

OXFORD, *Christ Church*: 25 Dec: 10am Matins, Britten in E, The Bishop; 11.15am Sung Eucharist, Missa brevis in F (Mozart), The Dean; 6pm Evensong.

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.45pm Solemn Eucharist, Little organ mass (Haydn), The Bishop. 25 Dec: 7.30am, *8.15am HC*: 9.30am *Matins, Stanford in C, The Precentor*; 11am Eucharist, Darke in F, The Dean; 3.30pm Evensong and Procession, Collegium regale (Wood).

PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Schubert in G, The Provost. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 9.30am Parish Communion, Mass of St Thomas (Thorne), The Bishop; *11.15pm Solemn Eucharist*, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), Canon Colin Bradley; 4pm Evening Prayer.

RIPON CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm *Midnight* Eucharist, Jackson in G, Canon Peter Marshall. 25 Dec: 8am Eucharist, Canon Michael Glanville-Smith; 9.30am Parish Eucharist, Jackson in G, The Bishop; 11.30am Matins, Britten in C, The Dean; 12.30pm Eucharist, The Rev David Murfet; 4pm Evensong with Carols round the Crib, Canon Keith Punshon.

ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Messe de minuit (Charpentier), The Bishop. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10.30am Sung Eucharist, Organ solo mass (Mozart), The Dean; 3.15pm Evensong.

ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL: 25 Dec: 8am HC with hymns; 9.30am Parish Eucharist, *On this day* (Hylton Stewart). The Bishop; 11.15am Matins, Collegium regale (Howells). The Dean; 12.30pm HC; 4pm Evensong.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.45pm First Eucharist of Christmas. Messe de minuit (Charpentier), The Very Rev Derek Watson. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10am Eucharist, Missa Sancti *Nicolai (Haydn)*, The Very Rev Derek Watson; 11.45am Family Service for Christmas Morning, Canon June Osborne; 3pm Evensong. Procession and Blessing of the Christmas Crib. Stanford in A.

SHEFFIELD CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Missa brevis (Mozart), Canon Christopher Smith. *25 Dec: 8am HC; 10am Morning* Prayer; 10.30am Sung Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop; 3pm Evening Prayer.

TRURO CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Jackson in G, The Curate. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 9am Matins; 10am Sung Eucharist, Coronation mass (Mozart), The Bishop of St Germans; 6.30pm Evening Prayer.

WAKEFIELD CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11pm Procession to the Crib and Midnight Mass, Messe de minuit (Charpentier), The Bishop. 25 Dec: 8am HC, Canon Ian Knox; 9.15am Parish Communion, I sing of a maiden (Hadley), Canon George Nairn-Briggs; 11am Solemn Eucharist, Coronation mass (Mozart), The Provost; 5pm Evensong.

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Missa Sancti Joannis de Deo (Haydn), The Dean. 25 Dec: 7am, 8am HC; 10.30am Matins, Collegium regale (Howells), The Bishop; 11.30am Eucharist, Coronation mass (Mozart); 3.30pm Evensong, Dyson in D.

WORCESTER CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Canon David Thomas. 25 Dec: 9.30am Family Eucharist, The Archdeacon; 11am Sung Eucharist, Messe solennelle (Langlais), The Bishop of Dudley; 4pm Evensong with Carols, Dyson in D.

BANGOR CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Choral Eucalrist, Jackson in G. 25 Dec: 8am Holy Eucharist; 9.45yb Cymun Bendigaid; 11am Choral Eucharist, Little organ mass (Haydn).

CARDIFF, Llandaff Cathedral 24 Dec: 9.30am Blessing of the Crib, Procession and First Eucharist of Christmas, The Dean. 25 Dec: 7am Holy Eucharist; 7.30am Matins; 8am Holy Eucharist; 9am Procession and Parish Eucharist; 10.45am Procession and Sung Eucharist, Schubert in G, the Bishop; 12.15pm Holy Eucharist; 12.30pm Evensong.

NEWPORT CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm First Eucharist of Christmas. 25 Dec: 10.30am Family Service.

ST ASAPH CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.45pm Choral Eucharist, Darke in F, The Very Rev Kerry Goulstone.

ST DAVIDS CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm First Eucharist of Christmas, Little organ mass (Haydn), The Dean. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 9.30am Cymun Bendigaid. Y Deon; 9.30am Family Eucharist, The Minor Canon; 11.15am Choral Matins, *Stanford in B flat*, The Dean; 4.15pm Evening Prayer

GLASGOW CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.15pm Christmas Eve Service, A Christmas carol (Darke), The Very Rev Dr WJ. Morris. 25 Dec: 11am Christmas Day SErvice, Stanford in B flat. The Very Rev Dr WJ. Morris.

BIRMINGHAM, St Chad's Cathedral: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Carols before Midnight Mass; 12am Sung Mass, Messe solennelle (Langlais), The Archbishop. 25 Dec: 9am Mass; 11am Sung Mass, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Administrator.

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass of Christmas, Messe de minuit (Charpentier), Canon Michael Saward. *25 Dec: 8am* HC; 8.45am Matins; 11am Sung Eucharist, Messe de minuit (Charpentier), The Dean: 3.15pm Evensong, Stanford in C.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Abbey Midnight Eucharist, Stanford in C and F, Canon Colin Semper. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10.30am Abbey Eucharist, Missa brevis in D (Mozart), Canon Anthony Harvey; 3pm Festal Evensong, Purcell in B flat.

SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL: 24 Dec: 11pm Choral Eucharist, Messe de minuit (Charpentier), The Bishop. 25 Dec: 9am Eucharist, The Provost; 11am Choral Eucharist, Schubert in G, The Provost.

Chapel Royal, St James's Palace: 25 Dec: 8.30am HC; 11.15am Sung Eucharist, Darke *in* E, The Rev WJ. Booth.

The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy, Savoy Hill, WC2: 25 Dec: 11am Sung Eucharist, Darke in F, The Chaplain.

Chapel Royal, Tower of London: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight HC, The Rev P.R.C. Abram.

Chapel Royal, Hampton Court: 24 Dec: 11pm Midnight Mass of the Nativity, with hymns. 25 Dec: 8.30am HC; 11am Matins, Stanford in A. A child is born (Scheidt).

Gray's Inn Chapel: 25 Dec: 8.30am HC.

Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, W1: 24 Dec: 11pm Carols for Choir and Congregation; 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Schubert in G, The Rev Simon Hobbs. *25 Dec: 11am Family Eucharist*, The Rev Dayton Dewey.

Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks, SW1: 24 Dec: 11.15pm Carols at the Manger; 11.30pm Midnight HC, Darke in F. 25 Dec: 11am Matins, Hodie Christus natus est (Sweelinck), The Rev Leslie H. Bryan; 12pm HC.

Royal Hospital Chelsea, SW3: 25 Dec: 11am Morning Prayer, All this night shrill chanticler (Finzi), The Rev T. Hiney.

***Royal Naval* College Chapel, Greenwich, SE10:** 25 Dec: 11am Sung Eucharist, Darke in F, The Rev Clive French.

All Saints, Margaret Street, W1: 24 Dec: 12am Midnight Mass, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), The Vicar. 25 Dec: 8am Low Mass; 10.20am Morning Prayer; 11am High Mass, Missa brevis in D (Mozart), *The Rev I.E. Davies*.

All Saints, Putney Bridge, SW6: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10.30am Family Communion.

***All Souls'*, Langham Place, W1:** 24 Dec: 11pm Christmas Eve Communion, Prebendary Richard Bewes. 25 Dec: 10.30am Family Service, The Rev John Cook.

The Annunciation, Marble Arch, W1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, O beatum et sacrosanctum diem (Phillips). 25 Dec: 11am Solemn Mass.

***Holy Trinity*, Brompton Road, *SW7*:** 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Communion, The Rev Simon Downham. 25 Dec: 11am Family Service, The Rev Sandy Millar; 12.15pm HC, The Rev Sandy Millar.

Holy Trinity, Prince Consort Road, SW7: 25 Dec: 11am-Eucharist with hymns, The Rev Bill Ratchford.

St Alban the Martyr, *Holborn, EC1*: 24 Dec: 11.40pm Carols; 12am Midnight Mass, Orgelsolomesse (Mozart).

St Botolph's, Aldgate, EC3: 25 Dec: 10.30am Sung Eucharist, The Rev Brian Lee.

St George's, Bloomsbury Way, WC1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass. 25 Dec: 11am Mass with Carols.

***St George's, Hanover Square*, W1:** 25 Dec: 8.30am HC; 11am Sung Eucharist, Missa brevis in F (Haydn), The Rector.

St James's, Piccadilly: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass. 25 Dec: 8.30am HC; 11am Sung Eucharist, The Rev Donald Reeves.

St James's, Sussex Gardens, W2: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Missa rorate coeli (Haydn), The Rev Bill Wilson. 25 Dec: 10.30am Sung Eucharist, Missa papae marcelli (Palestrina), The Rev Andrew Meldrum.

***St John's, Stratford Broadway, E15*:** 24 Dec: 11pm HC, Toccata (Widor), The Rev David Richards. 25 Dec: 11am Family Communion, The Rev Modicum Okello.

St John's Wood Church, NW8: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), The Vicar. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 9.30am Parish Communion; *11am Sung Eucharist*, Missa brevis in C (Mozart), The Rev Peter Grandell.

St Margaret's, Westminster Abbey: 24 Dec: 11.45pm Midnight Eucharist, Missa brevis (Kodaly), Canon Donald Gray. 25 Dec: 11am Matins, Britten in C, The Rev Dr Paul Bradshaw.

St Mark's, Regent's Park Road, NW1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Missa *Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), The Rev* Tom Devonshire-Jones. 25 Dec: 8am HC; 10.30am Parish Eucharist, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), The Rev Tom Devonshire Jones.

St Martin-in-the-Fields, WC2: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Mass. The Rev Bernhard Schünemann. 25 Dec: 10.30am Eucharist, The Vicar; 6.30pm Carols and Readings, The Rev Bernhard Schünemann.

St Mary Abbots, Vicarage Gate, W8: 25 Dec: 9.30am Parish Eucharist, Fr Gelli; 11.15am Choral Matins, The Vicar.

St Michael's, Chester Square, SW1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm HC. 25 Dec: 11am Family Communion.

St Paul's, Wilton Place, SW1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Messe di gloria (Puccini), The Rev Christopher *Courtauld*. 25 Dec: 9am HC; 11am Choral Eucharist, Missa Sancti Joannis de Deo (Haydn), The Rev Neil Dawson.

St Peter's, Eaton Square, SW1: 24 Dec: First Mass of Christmas, Coronation mass (Mozart). 25 Dec: 8.15am HC; 10am Family Eucharist; 11am Sung Eucharist, Missa hodie Christus natus est (Palestrina), Fr W.P Keyes.

Temple Church, Fleet Street, EC4: 25 Dec: 8.30am HC; 11.15am Morning Prayer and HC, Vaughan Williams in *G, The Master*.

St Columba's Church of Scotland, Pont Street, SW1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Candlelight Service. 25 Dec: 10am HC; 11am Family Service.

Crown Court (Church of Scotland), Russell Street, WC2: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Watchnight Service. 25 Dec: 11am Christmas Day Service.

Our Lady of the Assumption, Warwick Street, W1: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Carols, Spatzenmesse (Mozart).

The Oratory, Brompton Road, SW7: 24 Dec: 11.30pm Carols for Choir and Congregation; 12am Midnight Mass, Heiligmesse (Haydn). 25 Dec: 7am, 8am, 9am, *10am Mass; 11am Solemn* Mass, Missa bel amfirit altera (Lassus); 12.30pm Mass; 4.30pm Benediction; 4pm Evensong, Alma redemptoris mater (Palestrina).

City Temple, Holborn Viaduct, EC1: 25 Dec: 10.30am Service, Dr David Hilborn.

***Hinde Street Methodist Church*, *W1*:** 24 Dec: 11.30pm Christmas Eve HC. 25 Dec: 10.30am Christmas Celebration.

Westminster Central Hall (Methodist), SW1: 24 Dec: 11.15pm Midnight Communion, The Rev Eden Fletcher. 25 Dec: 10.30am Worship and Celebration, The Rev Eden Fletcher.

***Kensington United Reformed Church*, Allen Street, W8:** 24 Dec: 11.30pm Midnight Communion. The Rev Peter Loveitt. 25 Dec: 11am Christmas Morning Service, The Rev Peter Loveitt.

St Anne & St Agnes (Lutheran), Gresham Street, EC2: 24 Dec 11pm Candlelight Choral Eucharist, The Rev Paul D. Schmiege. 25 Dec 11am *Choral Eucharist, Andreas Fisher*.

Westminster Chapel (Independent Evangelical), Buckingham Gate, SW1: 25 Dec: 11am Christmas Day Service.

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2: 25 Dec: 11am Christmas Day Service, The Rev Barrie Hibbert.

Liese Spencer reports on offbeat seasonal revels, from mud-wallowing to fire-hurling

Now is the time to deck the halls with boughs of holly, stuff plum duff (whatever that may be) and rediscover all those traditional picture opportunities which seem best enjoyed at temperatures below freezing. If you can manage to extract your corpulent frame from the lethal TV-settee combo, here are some of the more eccentric Christian and Pagan celebrations you might want to experience, along with a few of dubious provenance but great popularity lifted direct from the great doomsday guide to local tourism.

If you're a denizen of West Yorkshire, why not risk tinnitus by celebrating midnight mass in Dewsbury, where the good burghers will be celebrating Christmas Eve by tolling the tenor bell of All Saints Church once for each year of the Christian era. Which means, of course, that this year a rota of ringers will be sounding 1,996 knells. The tradition dates back to the middle ages and a murderous local lord called Sir Thomas de Soothill, who after topping one of his enemies, donated the bell to expiate his crime. The practice is supposed to remind the Devil of his defeat and send him off with his ears ringing. *All Saints Parish Church, Dewsbury, W. Yorks (01924-457057) 24 Dec from 9.30pm.*

Alternatively, hear the more genteel jingle of morris dancers at Gloucester Cathedral on Boxing Day, where the waving of hankies and pigs bladders will be accompanied by theatre from the village mummers. *Cathedral Precints and New Inn Courtyard, Gloucester, Gloucestershire (01453-759 921) Boxing Day 12pm onwards.*

On New Year's Eve, why not go out for a spot of fireballing in Stonehaven? Organiser Bill Emslie has been burning up the high street of the old town for 30 years, and expects thousands of spectators this year to watch the parade to the town's canon. The 45 local men and women wield balls of flaming kindling and pine cones encased in mesh, and swing them round their heads. The tradition goes back hundreds of years and is thought to be a Pictish way of *burning out the spirits of the* old year to let in spirits of the new. The procession starts on the stroke of midnight and lasts 30 minutes before the fireballs are doused in the harbour. Although her daughter also takes part in the parade, Mrs Emslie refuses: "I'm not daft," she laughs, "although, once you've done it, I've heard it's so much fun you must do it again."

Further north still and you come across football festivities in Kirkwall. Dating back two-hundred years, this is no ordinary kickabout, but a mass rugby-like ruck between the "Oopies" from the top of the town and the "Doonies" from the bottom. With rough scrumming and scrabbling, penalties are rare and the

Boys from the black stuff surface in Maldon, Essex on New Year's Day

game only ends when the ball touches down at the castle or the harbour – which can be six or seven hours after kick-off. Phew. *Kirkwall, Isle of Orkney (01856 872961) New Year's Day.*

And just in case you thought Scotland had the monopoly on weird winter practices, rest assured – Essex ways of welcoming in the New Year are no less eccentric. On the first day of 1997, the town of Maldon invites game sorts to join in a mud race through the boggy reaches of the Blackwater Estuary with boys (and girls) from the black stuff raising money for charidee and enjoying a hot shower and pint after their wallow. *Promenade Park, Maldon, Essex (01621-875 842) New Year's Day from 12noon.*

Events

London

AFRICA CENTRE **African Christmas Gifts Sale** Stalls featuring wide selection plus live drumming sessions. King Street WC2 (0171-836 1973) ⊖ Covent Garden/Leicester Square. 21 Dec, 11am-7pm, free.

BARBICAN CENTRE FOYER **Designer Jewellers Group Plus Six Exhibition And Sale** 21 members and 6 graduates display exquisite collections. Silk Street EC2 (0171-638 4141) ⊖ Barbican/Moorgate. Mon-Sun (not 24 & 25 Dec) 9am-8pm, 26 Dec & 1 Jan, 12noon-8pm, ends 13 Jan, free.

BRITISH LIBRARY GALLERIES **Nothing Else But Noise And Dance** First ever display of unique 18th century theatrical material. Great Russell Street WC1(0171-412 7760/7222) ⊖ *Tottenham Court Road*. Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sun 2.30pm-6pm (not 24-26 Dec, 1 Jan), ends 17 Jan, free.

CONCOURSE GALLERY, BARBICAN CENTRE **Carmina Burana Experience** Medieval *text rediscovered 150 years ago inspires* art and music. Silk Street EC2 (0171-638 4141) ⊖ Barbican. Mon-Sat 10am-7.30pm, Sun & Bank Hols 12noon-7.30pm, ends 5 Jan, free.

CRAFTS COUNCIL

Nicky Lawler Shoes: Showcase Exhibition Display in cafe of fishskin loafers, perspex soles and more. Tue-Sat 11am-6pm (24 Dec, 11am-4pm), Sun 2pm-6pm (not 25-26 Dec, 30 Dec-1 Jan) ends 19 Jan, free.

Objects Of Our Time 120 new works of contemporary applied art displayed & on sale. Pentonville Road N1 (0171-278 7700) ⊖ Kings Cross/Angel. From 5 Dec, Tue-Sat 11am-6pm (24 Dec, 11am-4pm), Sun 2pm-6pm (closed 25-26, 30 Dec-1 Jan), ends 16 Feb, free.

EALING TOWN HALL **Tibet Foundation Christmas Fair 1996** Film, illustrated talk on medicine, & Tibetan handicrafts. New Broadway W5 (0171-404 2889) ⊖ Ealing Broadway. 21 Dec, 1.30-5.30pm, free.

EROS STATUE **Christmas Morning Guided Walk** Discover Christmas past and present in London's West End. Piccadilly Circus W1 (0181-888 7803) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. 25 Dec, 11am, £5.

GOETHE INSTITUTE **Best Of Berlin Film Festival** 1996's selection, with English subtitles. Princes Gate, Exhibition Road SW7 *(0171-411 3400)* ⊖ *South Kensington*. Times and dates vary, ends 29 Jan, £2.

THE JEWISH MUSEUM - CAMDEN TOWN ***And Shall I Well Among Them* Synagogues** of the world in photographs by Neil Folberg. Raymond Burton House, Albert Street NW1 (0171-284 1997) ⊖ Camden Town. Sun-Thu 10am-4pm (except public holidays & Jewish Festivals) ends 27 Mar, £3, OAP £2, concs £1.50.

MUSWELL HILL CENTRE **Muswell Hill Antique & Collectors Fair Plus Flea Market** Monthly fair plus flea market for antiques, bric brac and more. Summerland Gardens, Muswell Hill Road N10 (0181-440 2330) ⊖ Highgate. 21 Dec, 10am-4.30pm, free.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM-**Sir Joseph Banks: The Greening Of The Empire** The discoveries of a naturalist who sailed the seas with Capt Cook. Cromwell Road SW7 (0171-938 9123) ⊖ South Kensington. Mon-Sat 10am-5.50pm, Sun 11am-5.50pm, ends 23 Feb, £5.50, concs £3, child £2.80, under 5's free, family ticket £15.

ROUNDHOUSE **Chinese State Circus** Spectacular acrobatic event. Dazzling fun for entire family. Chalk Farm Road NW1 (0171-482 7318/420 0000) ⊖ Chalk Farm. Tue-Sat, 23 & 30 Dec, 8pm (not 25 & 31 Dec), mats Sat & Sun & 23-24, 26-27, 30 Dec, 1-3 Jan, 2.30pm, Sun 5.30pm, ends 26 Jan, £9-£18.50, concs £6-£15.50.

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL **The Scenic Eye: Visual Art And The Theatre Exhibition** Theatre as an inspiration and challenge to German visual arts. South Bank Centre SE1 (0171-960 4242) BR/⊖ Waterloo. Mon-Sun 10am-10.30pm, ends 26 Jan, free.

SHAKESPEARE GLOBE MUSEUM **Shakespeare's Globe Exhibition** Learn about its reconstruction and about Elizabethan Southwark. Bear Gardens SE1 9EB (0171-928 6406) ⊖ London Bridge/Mansion House. Mon-Sun 10am-5pm (not 24 & 25 Dec), guided tours each half hour, £5, concs £4, child £3, family ticket £14.

THEATRE MUSEUM **Dressing The Part** Celebration of the art of costume design and construction. Tavistock Street WC2E (0171-836 2330) ⊖ Covent Garden. Tue-Sun 11am-7pm, ends 25 May, £3.50, concs £2.

THEATRE MUSEUM **Exhibition of Nobby Clark's Photographs & *Billy Connolly Videos*** Legendary theatre photographer exhibits work. Tavistock Street WC2E (0171-836 2330) ⊖ Covent Garden. Tue-Sun 11am-7pm, ends 3 Jan, £3.50, concs £2.

WEST END DEPARTMENT STORES **Winter Sales In London's West End** Up-to-date info for major savings at London's lavish stores. W1 (0891-505 478) ⊖ Oxford Circus/Bond Street/Knightsbridge. Times and dates vary, phone for details, ends 2 Feb, free, phone call charged at up to 50p per minute.

WEMBLEY CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION CENTRE **Christmas Antiques And Collectors Fair** 400 stands plus furniture pitches and a courtesy coach from tube. Empire Way, Wembley (0181-902 8833) ⊖ Wembley Park. 27 Dec, 11am-4pm, £2.50, accompanied child free.

Regional

Brighton

ROYAL PAVILION **Royal Pavilion Christmas Celebrations** A festive mix of recitals, costumed history tours and children's activities. (01273-603005) 21 Dec, 10am-5pm, £3.95, concs £2.95, children £2.35, residents of Hove and Brighton £1.50.

Chelmsford

RIVERSIDE ICE AND LEISURE CENTRE **Aladdin On Ice** Popular panto set on ice. Victoria Rd (01245-265848) 21 & 22 Dec, 12noon & 4pm, £5.50-£7, concs £3-£4.50.

Falmouth

ARTS CENTRE **Carols For Christmas** Christmas singalong with the Falmouth Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. Church Street (01326-314566) 21 Dec, 7.30pm, £3.

Hastings

HASTINGS MUSEUM & ART GALLERY **A Gilded Feast: Christmas Crafts Exhibition** by some of the best craftmakers in the region including jewellery and toys. Cambridge Road (01424-781155) Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-1pm, Sun 3pm-5pm, ends 5 Jan, free.

Havant

HAVANT ARTS CENTRE **Pinoccio: Proteus Theatre Company** Fun for all the family with colour, magic and comic action. *East Street (01705-472700)* 22 Dec, 3pm, £5, children £2.50.

Luton

STOCKWOOD PARK STABLES **Horse Drawn Carriage Rides To Santa's Grotto** Receive a gift from Santa in his grotto. Farley Hill (01582-20766) Mon-Fri 3pm-6pm, Sat-Sun 1pm-6pm, ends 23 Dec, £2.50 children (includes gift), £1 adult (ride only).

Portsmouth

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE **Dickens Christmas Walk** Stroll taking in the sights of Dickens' place of birth. The Hard (01705-826722) 22 Dec, 2.30pm, £1, accompanied children free.

Worthing

MUSEUM & ART GALLERY **Favourite Things** Collections from 28 local people, including sick-bags, pencil-sharpeners, milk bottles *and buttons. Chapel Road (01903-204229)* Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, ends 11 Jan, free.

Children

London

BARBICAN CENTRE **Teddy Bears Concert** Music and stories for children and bears, featuring a special appearance by Father Christmas. 21 Dec, 3pm, £10.50, £9.50 with bear.

The Mad Hatter's Christmas Concert London Concert Orchestra presents seasonal music, special stories and surprises. Barbican EC2 (0171-638 8891) ⊖ Moorgate. 23 Dec, 3pm, 28 Dec, 3.30pm, £9.80.

BETHNAL GREEN MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD **Christmas Gifts 1996** The history of giving at Christmas explored with nativity scenes, christmas legends, and toys. Cambridge Heath Road E2 (0181-983 5200) ⊖ Bethnal Green. Mon-Thu/Sat 10am-5.50pm, Sun 2.30pm-5.50pm, ends 9 Jan, free.

HOXTON HALL **The Happy Prince** Adaptation of Oscar Wilde's classic, performed in Victorian *music hall (Age 7+)*. Hoxton St N1 (0171-739 5431) ⊖ Old Street. Dec, 3pm & 7.30pm, £2.50-£5.50, concs £2-£2.50.

LAUDERDALE HOUSE **Strawberry The Clown** *Gentle audience participation* & the humourous Strawberry battles with his rubber chicken (Age 3-8). Waterlow Park N6 (0181-348 8716) ⊖ Archway. 21 Dec 10am & 11.30am, £3, child £2, concs £2/£1.

LITTLE ANGEL MARIONETTE THEATRE **The Sleeping Beauty** A revival of classic production, featuring spinet music based on Tchaikovsky. Dagmar Passage, Cross Street N1 *(0171-226 1787)* ⊖ Highbury Islington/Angel. 21, 22 & 27 Dec, 11am (Age 3+p) & 3pm (Age 5+). 26 Dec, 3pm, ends 26 Jan, £6.50, concs/child £5.

LONDON ZOO **Christmas Festivities** Full of Christmas characters and animals. Regent's Park NW1 (0171-722 3333) ⊖ Camden Town. 21 & 22 Dec, 10am-4pm, 23 Dec, 10am-4pm, £11, child £9, booking essential.

LYRIC HAMMERSMITH **The Roly Poly Pudding** Intimate puppet show presented by Olly Cart Theatre Company (Age 2-5). King St W6 (0181-741 2311) ⊖ Hammersmith. Mon-Fri (not 24 & 25 Dec, 1 Jan), 11am & 2pm, Sat 11am & 1pm, ends 4 Jan, £4.

NATIONAL GALLERY **Stories On The Magic Carpet** Enchanting tales told in front of paintings (Age 7 and under) 21 Dec & 2-4 Jan, 1.30pm, ends 5 Jan, free.

The Great Xar Featuring magical illusions related to the gallery's paintings. For families and children. Trafalgar Sq WC2 (0171-839 3321) ⊖ Charing Cross. 21 Dec & 2-4 Jan, 11.30am & 2.30pm, ends 5 Jan, free.

TATE GALLERY **The Art Trolley: Holiday Activities For Young Visitors** *Accompanied* kids explore seasonal themes with drawing and word games (Ages 5-11). Millbank SW1 (0171-887 8765) ⊖ Pimlico. 27, 29-30 Dec, 2.15pm-4.45pm, free, booking advised.

VAUDEVILLE THEATRE **The Witches** Theatrical adaptation of Roald Dahl's story directed by David Wood. Strand WC2 (0171-836 9987) ⊖ Charing Cross. Mon-Sat 7pm (not 24 Dec), mats Tue-Fri 2pm, Sat 11am & 2pm (extra mats 24 & 31 Dec, 11am, 23, 24 & 31 Dec, 2pm), £9.50-£18, child £6.50-£12.

Regional

Brighton

CYBAR **E-On Saturday Morning Kids Club** Entertainment Online is the UK's first cyber club for children. Middle Street (01273-707 900) Sat 10.30am-12noon (not *28 Dec*), ends *4 Jan, £5*.

KOMEDIA **Mad Mash II with Bodger and Badger** The Children's BBC stars with magic, mayhem, mess and mashed potato (Ages 4+). Manchester Street (01273-277772) 22 Dec, *11am & 1pm, £3.50*.

Luton

LUTON REGIONAL SPORTS CENTRE **CJ The Clown's Christmas Show** Fun and laughs, magic and games (Ages 3-8). 23 Dec, 2pm-4pm, £3.

Father Christmas's Fun Day Music, games, trampolines, gym and a visit from Santa Claus (Ages 3-6). St Thomas Road (01582-416772) 24 Dec, 11am-3.30pm, £6 (includes *lunch and a present*).

Norwich

NORWICH PLAYHOUSE **Zippo's Circus** All-new circus extravaganza with thrilling performances. Trapezes, acrobats and clowns. St George's Street (01603-766466) 21 Dec, 2pm & 7pm, £7, children £4.

NORWICH PUPPET THEATRE **Jack & The Beanstalk** Colourful puppet production. St James's, Whitefriars (01603-629921) *Times vary (11am & 2.30pm performances)* (not 25 Dec) ends 5 Jan, £4.75, concs £3.75.

Oxford

OLD FIRE STATION THEATRE **Princess Forget-Me-Not and the Strange Planet Immobilon** Colourful fairy-tale show for children aged 5 and over, with music and magic. George Street (01865-794494) 27-30 Dec, 2.30pm & 6.30pm, £6.50, concs £4.50.

Penzance

ACORN THEATRE **Telling Tales** Visual stories from the spicy desert, for five year olds and above. Parade Street (01736-65520) 21 Dec, 7.30pm, £4, children £2.50.

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Christmas guide to the best in walks 21-27 December

Landscapes that come alive

Richard D North rambles in artistic landscapes – and lists country walks for the energetic

In the next few days, many of us will do more walking in the countryside than in the rest of the year combined. It's the idleness and the gluttony, and the sheer expanse of empty days, that encourage it. We want to stretch our limbs and refresh the eye, and the Ramblers' Association is there to help us, wherever we live. For Londoners, though, the aching feet might just as well be had from walking round the Tate, the Royal Academy, the Wallace Collection or the National Gallery: all have shows which brilliantly delight, and show us how we came to love the countryside beyond the city's walls.

It's a curiosity that until recently the British were too modest to notice or declare that their landscape is the loveliest in the world. They knew, of course, that the nation was an aesthetic and artistic periphery. The civilised British person has always known well enough that we were the best governed, the most inventive, the most thoughtful and perhaps the only honest people in Europe (itself the only place which could possibly matter). We might even be capable of quite decent religious feeling. But for matters of the heart, for romance, sensibility, and for things to delight the eye, we went abroad. For centuries, our footsteps have taken us to Venice, Florence or Paris. The artistic and intellectual fallout from the Grand Tour is the subject of a show at the Tate, and is cleverly charted in a new book whose title says it all: *Transports: Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830*. (At £35, it will burn up a couple of book tokens; at 6½ lb, don't put it in your knapsack.)

It was the work of Claude Lorrain (one included at the Royal Academy's heavenly show of drawings) which made the leaders of taste in 17th- and 18th-century England suddenly see that their own estates and environs might quite easily be envisaged as suitable subjects even for such a genius. Men such as Alexander Cozens and his son John (patronised by the Herefordshire landowner and proto-conservationist Richard Payne Knight) parlayed Claude into Englishness, as the Royal Academy examples of all three help explain. During the National Gallery's brilliant Claude show a couple of years ago, it was Paul Johnson who pointed out that no tree has ever grown the way Claude painted it. None the less, in his slightly absurd way Claude put man and mythology into a natural scene in a way which made connoisseurs look at landscape with fresh eyes. By the end of the 18th century people were walking in the Valley of the Wye (or amongst the industrialised streams anywhere from Wales to Shropshire and beyond), knowing the scenes of mills, woods, and furnaces were "picturesque". With a little tinkering, the English landscape could be made worthy of Claude himself. No one used the words, but habitat management was also born.

Following the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich (included at the RA) and other northern Continentals, an altogether more rugged aesthetic emerged and infused the Picturesque: crags, waterfalls, violent rivers became cynosures and the obviously grand and dangerous uplands of the Lake District, Yorkshire or Cumbria thrilled as well delighted the person of sensibility. There was talk of the sublime. In the Continentals, there was also a sort of visionary quality of which I'm suspicious, though it comes out well in Samuel Palmer's works (a lovely one illuminates the RA's show). Thank God, we were seldom neurotic in our love of nature.

A lovely show at the National Gallery helps us see something else about the growth in landscape feeling. Whilst his contemporaries and most of his customers would not have understood quite why, Rubens was drawn to paint landscape, mostly for his own delight. He was, as the *Making and Meaning: Rubens's Landscape* catalogue explains, building on a Flemish tradition dating from the early 16th century: one that painted landscape with delight and accuracy. Rubens's *Landscape in Flanders* helps us see how we came to admire really ordinary farmland (it is normally at the Barber Institute at the University of Birmingham; there is another example in the Wallace Collection, near the Fragonard painting that was worked up from a lovely drawing in the RA show).

Now it is the almost furtively wild – the feral – surroundings of any town, whether Newbury (sense the canalside quiet while you may), the water meadows of Sudbury, in Suffolk, or Cricklade in Wiltshire, which many of us walk in most and love most. True, Rubens's scenes are on a larger scale (I see the duller bits of Herefordshire in them), but they are of flat and featureless countryside. It was this work which inspired Constable, so it was through Flanders that we saw Suffolk as lovely. That ultimate English icon, *The Haywain*, was directly inspired by Rubens. I'd rather see the connection between the genius of Flanders and Constable's fine (he called it "rugged") drawing of a humdrum river near Petworth. In any case, the English love-affair with great painting, and our preparedness to learn from it, gave us our understanding that nowhere on earth was granted such a compact variety of landscape, from the grand to the familiar. And both the art and the land remain astonishingly available to us.

The Tate Gallery. 'The Grand Tour: the Lure of Italy in the 18th Century'. Until 5 Jan. Mon-Sat, 10am-5.50pm, Sun 2-5.50pm. Closed 24-26 Dec, open all over New Year. Adults £6, concessions £3.50
The Royal Academy, Piccadilly. 'From Mantegna to Picasso, Drawings from the Thaw Collection'. Until 23 Jan. Open 10am-6pm daily, closed 24-26 Dec, open all over New Year. To avoid queuing, book tickets in advance (0171 494 5676). Adults £5, concessions £3.50
The Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, W1. A vast jumble of stunning art. Open 10am-5pm, Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun. Closed 24-26 Dec, closed January 1. Free.
The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square. 'Making and Meaning: Rubens's Landscapes'. Opening as for the rest of the gallery. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm Mon-Sat (10am-8pm Wednesday) and 12pm-6pm Sun. Closed 24-26 Dec, 1 Jan. Free.

From Avon to Wrexham via a pub or two

England

AVON (see Glos & Somerset)

BEDFORDSHIRE
26 Dec: CLOPHILL, 10.30am, The Green, 6 mls, D. 01582 743412(d), 01462 672906(e). 27 Dec: LUTON, 10am, Caddington village green, by shops, 4/5 mls. 01582 505808. MILTON BRYAN, 10am, church, 6 mls. 01582 743412(d), 01462 672906(e).

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
26 Dec: WOBURN TOWN, 11am, Woburn Park car park, 3½ mls. 01628 22991.

CHESHIRE
26 Dec: FRODSHAM, 2pm, Aston Arms, Mill Lane, off A56, 5 mls, D 01928 575726. LITTLE BUDWORTH, 10.30am, Little Budworth Common Country Park, car park off A49, 6 or 8 mls, D. 01925 722385.

CORNWALL
27 Dec: CRANTOCK (NEWQUAY), 1.30pm, West Pentire Village car park, 4½ mls, D. 01326 340728. POLZEATH, 1.30pm, New Polzeath car park, 3 mls. 01208 73489.

CUMBRIA
26 Dec: COCKERMOUTH, 10am, 10 mls, 01228 74746. 29 Dec: CARLISLE, 10am, The Sands car park, near Turf Inn, 5 mls, D. 01228 74746. 1 Jan: BRAMPTON, 9.45am, Talkin' Tarn car park, 7 mls. 01228 23656.

DERBYSHIRE
27 Dec: TICKNALL, 10am, Village Hall car park, 8 mls, D. 01332 516264. TOTLEY MOOR, 10 mls, 01625 426387(e).

DEVON
26 Dec: BARNSTAPLE, 10.30am, Arlington NT car park, 2½ hours with shorter option, D. 01271 76274. BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, 10.30am, car park, 8 mls, D. TEIGNMOUTH, 9.30am, Lower Woodway Rd, 6 mls. 01626 777641. WOOLSTON GREEN, 10am, Totnes Borough car park, 5½ mls, D. 01803 862829. 27 Dec: WOODBURY, 10am, Four Firs car park, 8 mls, D. 01392 413073.

DORSET
27 Dec: ABBOTSBURY, 10.30am, village car park, 4 or 8 mls. 01305 784672.

DURHAM
25 Dec: LANGLEY PARK, 10.30am, Kaysburn Rd Ends, 6 mls, D, 0191 3736037. 29 Dec: BURNHOPE, 10.30am, picnic site, 6-7 mls.

ESSEX
26 Dec: EASTWOOD, 10am, Edwards Hall Park car park, 5 mls, D. 01702 529884. EPPING, 10.30am, Tube station, 6 mls. 0181 590 6444(e). KELVEDON, 10.30am, playing field car park, 3-4 mls. 12 01708 509935. LOUGHTON, 10.30am, Tube station, 8-9 mls. 0181-502 2390. 27 Dec: DANBURY, 10.30am, Danbury Common NT car park, 8 mls. D. 17 01621 828392. 27 Dec: BISHOPS CLEEVE, 10am, Post Office, 5½ mls. 01242 674470.

HAMPSHIRE
27 Dec: ASHURST, 10.30am, station car park, by New Forest Hotel, 6 mls, D. 01703 79640. SOUTHWICK, 10am, public car park, Golden Lion, 5 or 10 mls, D. 01329 284556. SOUTHWICK, 1.30pm, public car park, Golden Lion, 5 mls. 01329 284556.

HEREFORD & WORCESTER
26 Dec: HALESOWEN, 10am, Nimmings car park, Clent Hills, 6 mls. 01384 395692(e). 27 Dec: BROMSGROVE, 10am, old A38 (Birmingham) road, Lydiate Ash, 4 and 8 mls. D. 01527 877122.

HERTFORDSHIRE
26 Dec: BAYFORD, 10.30am, station car park, 8 mls, D. 0181 360 0268. LILLEY, 10am, off Links Way, 5 mls.

KENT
26 Dec: COBHAM, 10am, public car park, 5 mls. 01322 554259. KESTON (BROMLEY), 10am, Commonside car park, 4-5 mls. D.
27 Dec: OTFORD, 10.30am, village car park (call contact if you want pub lunch), 7 mls. D. 0181 468 7867. SHIPBOURNE, 11.30am, church, 4½ mls. D. 01732 851310.

LANCASHIRE
26 Dec: HOGHTON, 1pm, Station Rd, by level crossing, 6 mls. D. 01772 312027. 26 Dec: PARBOLD, 1.30pm, railway station, 5 mls, D. 01772 812034(e). TOSSIDE, 10am, call for meeting place, 5-6 mls. D. 01200 423881 (e). 27 Dec: DARWEN, 9.30am, Entwistle reservoir car park, Green Arms Rd, 10 mls, D. 01772 431053 or 01257 263841(e). GARSTANG, 10am, Community Centre car park, 7 mls. 01995 604716.

LEICESTERSHIRE
26 Dec: LUTTERWORTH, 10.30am, Town Hall car park, 4 mls. 01445 552265. WOODHOUSE EAVES, 10.30am, Main Street car park, 6½ mls, D. 01509 413801(e).

LINCOLNSHIRE
26 Dec: HORNCASTLE, 10am, Market Place, 4½ mls, D. 01507 523013. STAMFORD, 10am, Pickworth Church, 9-10 mls, D. 01778 426417(e). WELBOURN, 10.30am, View Point, Pottergate Rd, 1½ miles SW of Wellingore picnic site, 4-5 mls, D. 01522 522934(e).

LONDON
26 Dec: TOTTERIDGE, 1.30pm, Totteridge & Whetstone Tube station, 6 mls, D. 27 Dec: STANMORE, 11.15am, Tube station, 6½ mls, D. 0171 722 5039.

MERSEYSIDE
26 Dec: NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS, 2pm, Sankey Valley car park, Wharf Rd, 5 mls, D. 01928 575726.
27 Dec: HESWALL, 10.30am, Banks Rd car park, Lower Heswall, 6 mls.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
22 Dec: SLIPTON, 10.30am, Samuel Pepys pub, 4½ mls, D. 01536 723394. 26 Dec: BRAFIELD, 9.30am, church, 5-6 mls, D. 01604 492265(e). CHIPPING WARDEN, 10am, the church, 6½ mls, D. 01295 266979. ISHAM, 1pm, The Lilacs pub, 5 mls, D. 01536 511162(e).

NORTHUMBERLAND
27 Dec: MORPETH, 10am, coach stop (pre-paid booking fee for bus journey to Morpeth, £4). Prudhoe Place, Newcastle, various lengths, 7 to 14 mls. 22 0191 285 3050.
29 Dec: ALWINTON, 9.30am, coach stop (pre-paid booking fee for bus journey to Alwinton, £4), Prudhoe Place, Newcastle, various lengths. 7 to 14 mls. 0191 487 1541. CRASTER, 10.30am, Quarry car park, 7 mls. 01665 605212.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
26 Dec: NOTTINGHAM. 11am, Clumber Park cricket field, 4-5 mls, D. 01302 743789.

OXFORDSHIRE
26 Dec: CROCKER END, 10am, Crocker End Green, Nettlebed, near Henley, 9 mls, D. 01491 574065. 27 Dec: BUSCOT, 10am, National Trust car park, 5 or 6½ mls, D. 01367 241384.

SHROPSHIRE
27 Dec: CHURCH STRETTON, 10.30am, car park, Easthope Rd, 8 mls, D. 01743 244922.

SOMERSET (inc Bath)
26 Dec: PORTISHEAD, 10am, Esplanade (south end), 5 mls, D. 0117 9324791. STREET, 10.30am, youth hostel, 4-5 mls, D. 01458 447421. 27 Dec: STREET, 10.15am, youth hostel, 5½ mls, D. 01458 447421. TAUNTON DEANE, 1.45pm, Langford Heathfield view point, 4 mls, D. 01823 324185.

STAFFORDSHIRE
22 Dec: TAMWORTH, 10.30am, Spinning School Lane car park, 6 mls. 01827 899355. 26 Dec: BIDDULPH, 6-8 mls. 01782 512545, 26 Dec: BURY ST EDMUNDS, 10.30am, Christchurch Moreton Hall Estate, 5 mls. Dogs allowed at rear. 01284 768729. IPSWICH, 10am, first lay-by, left-hand side of Preston Hill, B1456, Shotley Rd, 5 mls, D. 01473 623431.

SURREY
26 Dec: CHOBHAM, two walks starting at village car park. 10am, 6 mls. 1.15pm. 5 mls, D. 01483 768548. COULSDON COMMON, two walks starting at The Fox pub. 10am, 5 or 10 mls. 1.30pm, 5 mls. 0181-660 5733. ENGLEFIELD GREEN, 10am, Fox & Hounds pub, 6 mls, D. 01276 26921. EPSOM, 10am, Headley Heath main car park, 5 mls, D. 0181 3372485. REIGATE, 10.30am, Reigate Heath car park, Flanchford Rd, 5 mls. 01737 833155. 27 Dec: FARNCOMBE, 10am, swimming-pool car park, Summers Rd, 9 mls, D. 01428 682842. OXSHOTT, 10am, car park on north side of station, 5 mls, D. 01372 720816.

SUSSEX (EAST)
26 Dec: WINCHELSEA, 10am, Lay-by next to Monks Walk, 6 mls. 01424 213366(e).

SUSSEX (WEST)
26 Dec: WASHINGTON, 1.30pm, Frankland Arms area, 4-5 mls, D. 01273 452360.

TYNE & WEAR (inc Gateshead and Sunderland)
26 Dec: WHITBURN, 11am, Lizard Point car park, near Souter Lighthouse, 6 mls, D. 0191 5841736. 1 Jan: WHICKHAM, 1pm, Woodman's Arms, Fellside Rd, 4-5 mls. 0191 4887693.

WARWICKSHIRE
27 Dec: KENILWORTH, 10.30am, Kenilworth Castle car park, 6 mls. 01203 403737.

WILTSHIRE
26 Dec: SWINDON, 10.15am, Barbury Castle Country Park car park, 5 mls, a 01793 525912. WARMINSTER, 10am, Nockatt's Coppice car park, 7 mls, D. 01225 753897.

YORKSHIRE (EAST RIDING, KINGSTON UPON HULL & YORK)
26 Dec: HULL, 10.30am, Welton Pond, 8 mls, D. 01904 708479.
27 Dec: BEVERLEY, 10.30am, Morrisons supermarket car park, 5 mls, D. 01482 861988.

YORKSHIRE (NORTH)
26 Dec: MALTON. 10am, Barton Hill, 10 mls. D. 01904 708479.

YORKSHIRE (SOUTH)
26 Dec: ROTHERHAM/ KIMBERWORTH, 10am, A629, junction of Oaks Lane and Old Wortley Rd, 8 mls, D. 22 01709 585389 (e). 27 Dec: MUSBOROUGH, 9.30am, Crystal Peaks tram stop, 8 mls. 0114 2738339 (e).

YORKSHIRE (WEST)
26 Dec: PATELEY BRIDGE, 10.15am, riverside car park, 10 mls. 01977 675017. 27 Dec: BURLEY IN WHARFEDALE. 10.30am, railway station, 6 mls, D. 01943 863786.

Scotland

EAST LOTHIAN
26 Dec: MUSSELBURGH, 10.30am, Mall Avenue car park, 6-7 mls, D. 0131 665 3549.

MORAY
26 Dec: ELGIN. 10am, Cathedral, 6 mls.

N AYRSHIRE, N LANARKSHIRE
26 Dec: CUMBERNAULD, 9am, Technical College, walking in Old Kilpatrick, 9 mls. 01236 824621.

Wales

CAERPHILLY
26 Dec: CASCADE, 10am, Gelligaer Community Council Office, 3½ mls, D. 01443 836257.

CARMARTHENSHIRE
26 Dec: LLANDOVERY, 11am, meet in car park, 4 mls, D. 01550 777623.

CEREDIGION
26 Dec: ABERYSTWYTH, 1.45pm, Welsh Books Council, Bryn Rd, 4-5 mls. 01970 612012.

GWYNEDD
27 Dec: CHWILOG, 11am, ½ mile east of Chwilog on 64354, 4 or 8 mls, D. 01766 310997.

RHONDDA, CYNON, TAFF
26 Dec: LLANTRISANT, 10.30am, Leisure Centre, 8 mls, D. 01443 437697.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN
27 Dec: COWBRIDGE, 10am, Town Hall car park, 8 mls. 01446 774706(e).

WREXHAM
27 Dec: ERDIGG, 10am, Yale Hostel car park, 4-5 mls. 01978 755406.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS
D: Dogs welcome but must be kept on a lead.
(d): Daytime telephone number
(e): Evening telephone number

Christmas guide to the arts, entertainment 21-27 December

Belles of the ball: the Royal Ballet performs Frederick Ashton's production of 'Cinderella', by Prokofiev, at the Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden

Theatre

WEST END

Art
Tom Courtenay and Albert Finney in Yasmina Reza's drama about art and friendship. *Wyndham's Theatre* Charing Cross Rd WC2 (0171-369 1736 cc 867 1111) ⊖ Leicester Sq. Tue-Sat 8pm, mats Wed 3pm, Sat & Sun 5pm (24 Dec, 3pm only, 27 Dec, 5pm & 8pm, 31 Dec, 5pm only, no perf 25 Dec) £7.50-£25. 90 mins.

As You Like It
Niamh Cusack in Steven Pimlott's production of Shakespeare's meditation. *Barbican Theatre* EC2 (0171-638 8891) ⊖ Barbican/Moorgate. In rep, 23, 26-28 Dec, 7.15pm, mats 21 & 28 Dec, 2pm, ends 29 Mar, £6-£24.50. 195 mins.

The Beauty Queen Of Leenane
Martin McDonagh's comedy set in Connemara. *Royal Court (at the Duke Of York's)* St Martin's Lane WC2 (0171-565 5000) ⊖ Charing Cross. Mon-Sat 7.30pm (not 23-26 Dec & 1 Jan) mats Sat 3.30pm, ends 11 Jan, £5-£18, benches 10p, Mon all seats £5. 130 mins.

Blinded By The Sun
Stephen Poliakoff's scientific detective story stars Frances de la Tour and Graham Crowden. *National Theatre: Cottesloe* South Bank SE1 (0171-928 2252) ⊖ Waterloo. In rep, 23, 26-28 Dec, 7.30pm, mats 27 & 28 Dec, 2.30pm, ends 28 Dec, £10, restricted view £12. 150 mins.

Blood Brothers
Phoenix Theatre Charing Cross Road WC2 (0171-369 1733) ⊖ Leicester Square. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Thu 3pm, Sat 4pm (24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm) £9.50-£27.50. 165 mins.

Buddy
Strand Theatre Aldwych WC2 (0171-930 8800) ⊖ Covent Garden. Tue-Thu 8pm, Fri 5.30pm & 8.30pm, Sat 5pm & 8.30pm, mats Sun 4pm (30 Dec & 2 Jan, 5.30pm & 8.30pm, no perfs 23-25 Dec) £4.50-£28.50. 160 mins.

By Jeeves
Lloyd Webber Ayckbourn musical collaboration based on the PG Wodehouse stories. *Lyric Theatre* Shaftesbury Avenue W1 (0171-494 5045) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm (23 & 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, 24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec) £11.50-£25. 140 mins.

Cash On Delivery
Bradley Walsh plays a DSS cheat in Michael Cooney's farce. *Whitehall Theatre* Whitehall SW1 (0171-369 1735 cc 867 1111) BR/⊖ Charing Cross. Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat 8.30pm, mats Wed 3pm, Sat 5.30pm (26 Dec, 3pm & 8pm, 31 Dec, 6pm, no perf 25 Dec) £10-£22. 135 mins.

Cats
New London Theatre Drury Lane WC2 (0171-405 0072 cc 404 4079) ⊖ Covent Garden/Holborn. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Tue & Sat 3pm (23 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, 24 Dec, 3pm only, 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, no perf 25 Dec) £10.50-£32.50. 165 mins.

Le Cercle Invisible
Victoria Chaplin and Jean-Baptiste Thierrée's evocative distillation of the circus form. *Mermaid Theatre* Puddle Dock EC4 (0171-236 2211) BR/⊖ Blackfriars. Tue-Sat 7.30pm (23 & 30 Dec, 7.30pm, not 24, 26, 31 Dec, 1 Jan) mats Sun 4pm (extra mats 24, 26, 31 Dec, 1 Jan, 4pm) ends 12 Jan, £13.50-£19.50, concs & standby £10, child £10, family of four £50. 120 mins.

The Cherry Orchard
Alec McCowen and Penelope Wilton in Adrian Noble's 1995 production of Chekhov. *Albery Theatre* St Martin's Lane WC2 (0171-369 1730 cc 867 1111) ⊖ Leicester Square. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Thu & Sat 3pm, ends 25 Jan, £10-£25. 165 mins.

A Christmas Carol
Starring Richard Briers as Scrooge. *Lyric Hammersmith* King Street W6 (0181-741 2311) ⊖ Hammersmith. In rep, 21, 23, 26-28, 30-31 Dec, 7.30pm, mats 21, 26, 28 & 31 Dec, 2.30pm, ends 18 Jan, £10-£15, under 16s £6, all seats Mon £5.

The Complete History Of America (Abridged)
Tue 8pm (no perf 24 Dec) £5.50-£20. 120 mins.

The Complete Works Of William Shakespeare (Abridged)
Criterion Theatre Picc Circus W1 (0171-369 1747) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. Wed-Sat 8pm, mats Thu 3pm, Sat 5pm, Sun 4pm (no perfs 24 & 25 Dec) £5.50-£20. 120 mins.

Death Of A Salesman
Alun Armstrong stars in Miller's drama. *National Theatre: Lyttelton* South Bank SE1 (0171-928 2252) ⊖ Waterloo. In rep, 23, 26-28, 30-31 Dec, 7.30pm, mats 28 & 31 Dec, 2.15pm, continuing in rep, £8-£24. 175 mins.

A Doll's House
Starring Janet McTeer and Owen Teale. *Playhouse Theatre* Northumberland Ave WC2 (0171-839 4401) ⊖ Embankment. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Sat 2.30pm (no perfs 24-25, 31 Dec) ends 11 Jan, £10-£23.50. 180 mins.

Don't Dress For Dinner
Duchess Theatre Catherine St WC2 (0171-494 5075 cc 344 4444) ⊖ Covt Gn. Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat 5pm & 8.30pm, mats Wed 3pm (24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 27 Dec, 5pm & 8.30pm) £9-£19.50. 165 mins.

Fair Ladies At A Game Of Poem Cards
A young samurai and a maid fall in love in this tale of forbidden courtly love. *National Theatre: Cottesloe* South Bank SE1 (0171-928 2252) BR/⊖ Waterloo. In rep, 21, 30-31 Dec, 7.30pm, mat 21 Dec, 2.30pm, ends 29 Jan, £16, restricted view £12. 165 mins.

Grease
Cambridge Theatre Earlham Street WC2 (0171-494 5080) ⊖ Covent Garden. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm (23 & 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.30pm, 24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec) £10-£27.50. 150 mins.

Guys And Dolls
Starring Clarke Peters and Joanna Riding. *National Theatre: Olivier* South Bank SE1 (0171-928 2252) BR/⊖ Waterloo. Mon-Sat 7.15pm (no perf 24 & 25 Dec) mats Sat 2pm (extra mats 26 & 31 Dec, 2pm) ends 29 Mar, £12-£32.50. 165 mins.

An Ideal Husband
With Simon Ward and Carol Drinkwater. *Old Vic* Waterloo Road SE1 (0171-928 6655) BR/⊖ Waterloo. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm (24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.30pm) ends 25 Jan, £6-£24. 165 mins.

I Licked A Slag's Deodorant
Jim Cartwright's gritty drama about a crack-addicted street walker. *Royal Court Theatre Upstairs (at The Ambassadors)* West St WC2 (0171-565 5000/cc 730 2554) ⊖ Leicester Sq. Last perf, 21 Dec, 9.30pm, £10, concs £5, Mon £5. 60 mins.

An Inspector Calls
Stephen Daldry's acclaimed production. *Garrick Theatre* Charing Cross Road WC2 (0171-494 5085) ⊖ Leicester Square. Mon-Fri 7.45pm, Sat 8.15pm, mats Wed 2.30pm, Sat 5pm, £9-£24.50. 110 mins.

Jesus Christ Superstar
Lyceum Theatre Wellington St WC2 (0171-656 1802) ⊖ Charing Cross/Embankment. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm (24 Dec, 3pm only, 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, no perf 25 Dec) £15-£32.50. 165 mins.

John Gabriel Borkman
Paul Scofield, Vanessa Redgrave and Eileen Atkins in Ibsen's late play. *National Theatre: Lyttelton* South Bank SE1 (0171-928 2252) ⊖ Waterloo. Last perfs, 21 Dec, 2.15pm & 7.30pm, £8-£24. 150 mins.

Jolson
Victoria Palace Victoria St SW1 (0171-834 1317) ⊖ Victoria. Tue-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed, Thu & Sat 3pm (27 Dec, 3pm & 7.30pm, no perf 24-26 Dec) £12.50-£30. 170 mins.

Laughter On The 23rd Floor
Gene Wilder plays a 1950s TV comic besieged by McCarthyism in Neil Simon's comedy. *Queen's Theatre* Shaftesbury Avenue W1 (0171-494 5590/cc 344 4444) ⊖ Picc Circus. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Wed 2.30pm, Sat 4pm (24 Dec, 2.30pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 27 Dec, 2.30pm & 8pm) £9.50-£25. 140 mins.

Les Misérables
Palace Theatre Shaftesbury Avenue W1 (0171-434 0909) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Thu & Sat 2.30pm (23 Dec, 2.30pm & 7.30pm, 24 Dec, 2.30pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 26 Dec, 7.30pm only, 27 Dec, 2.30pm & 7.30pm) £7-£30. 195 mins.

Macbeth
Barbican Theatre Barbican Centre EC2 (0171-638 8891) ⊖ Barbican/Moorgate. In rep, 31 Dec, 7.15pm, ends 27 Mar, £6-£24.50. 195 mins.

Martin Guerre
Prince Edward Theatre Old Compton Street W1 (0171-447 5400) ⊖ Leicester Sq/Tottenham Ct Rd. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Thu & Sat 3pm (23-24, 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, 24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 26 Dec, 7.45pm only) £16.50-£32.50. 150 mins.

Miss Saigon
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane Catherine Street WC2 (0171-494 5060) ⊖ Covent Garden. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm, £8.50-£32.50. 165 mins.

The Mousetrap
St Martin's Theatre West St WC2 (0171-836 1443) ⊖ Leicester Sq. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Tue 2.45pm, Sat 5pm (31 Dec, 2.45pm & 8pm, no perf 24 & 25 Dec) £8-£22. 135 mins.

Nine
Fellini-inspired musical about a film-maker whose woman trouble causes a creative block. *Donmar Warehouse* Earlham Street WC2 (0171-369 1732) ⊖ Leicester Sq. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm, (no perfs 24 & 25 Dec) ends 8 Mar, £12-£25. 120 mins.

The Official Tribute To The Blues Brothers
Apollo Theatre Shaftesbury Avenue W1 (0171-494 5070) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Thu 8pm, Fri & Sat 6pm & 9pm, ends 18 Jan, £7.50-£25. 130 mins.

Old Wicked Songs
Starring Bob Hoskins. *Gielgud Theatre* Shaftesbury Ave W1 (0171-494 5065) ⊖ Picc Circ. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Thu 2.30pm, Sat 4pm, £9-£24. 120 mins.

Oliver!
Palladium Argyll St W1 (0171-494 5020/5038) ⊖ Oxford Cir. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat 2.30pm, £10-£32.50. 150 mins.

The 1 You Love
Tim Luscombe's decorless play. *Royal Court Theatre Upstairs (at The Ambassadors)* West St WC2 (0171-565 5000/cc 730 2554) ⊖ Leicester Square. 21 Dec, 7.15pm, £10, benches 10p.

The Phantom Of The Opera
Her Majesty's Theatre Haymarket SW1 (0171-494 5400/cc 344 4444) ⊖ Picc Circ. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Wed & Sat 3pm, £9-£30. 150 mins.

Plunder
Griff Rhys Jones stars in Ben Travers' farce about the attempt to win an inheritance. *Savoy Theatre* Strand WC2 (0171-836 8888/cc 0479) ⊖ Charing Cross/Embankment. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Thu & Sat 2.30pm (no perfs 24 & 25 Dec, 26 Dec, 7.30pm only, 27 Dec, 2.30 & 7.30pm) £10-£25. 160 mins.

Riverdance - The Show
Hammersmith Apollo Queen Caroline Street W6 (0171-416 6080) ⊖ Hammersmith. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Sat 2.30pm, (23 & 30 Dec, 2.30pm & 8pm, 29 Dec, 8pm, no perfs 24-26 Dec) ends 18 Jan, £12-£28.50 plus £1.50 booking fee. 140 mins.

Scrooge
Anthony Newley humbugs his way through. *Dominion Theatre* Tottenham Ct Rd W1 (0171-416 6060) ⊖ Tottenham Ct Rd. Mon-Sat 7.30pm (not 24, 25, 31 Dec) mats Thu & Sat 3pm (extra mats 23, 24, 27, 30, 31 Dec, 3pm) ends 1 Feb, £5.50-£27.50. 150 mins.

Smokey Joe's Cafe - The Songs Of Leiber And Stoller
The rock and roll hitmakers celebrated in a musical revue that includes Jailhouse Rock. *Prince of Wales Theatre* Coventry Street W1 (0171-839 5972) ⊖ Leicester Sq. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Thu & Sat 3pm (24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec, 26 Dec, 8pm only, 27 Dec, 3pm & 8pm) £15-£30. 135 mins.

Starlight Express
Apollo Victoria Wilton Rd SW1 (0171-416 6070) ⊖ Victoria. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Tue & Sat 3pm (23, 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, 24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec) £12.50-£30. 150 mins.

A Streetcar Named Desire
Tennessee Williams' tense drama. *Theatre Royal* Haymarket SW1 (0171-930 8800) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Sat 7.45pm (no perf 24 & 25 Dec, 30 Dec, 7pm) mats Thu (not 26 Dec) & Sat 3pm (extra mats 24 & 27 Dec, 3pm) £10-£30.

Sunset Boulevard
Adelphi Theatre Strand WC2 (0171-344 0055) ⊖ Charing Cross. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Thu & Sat 3pm (23 & 27 Dec, 3pm & 7.45pm, 24 Dec, 3pm only, no perf 25 Dec) £15-£32.50. 160 mins.

Talking Heads
Alan Bennett monologues performed by Maggie Smith and Margaret Tyzack. *Comedy Theatre* Panton Street SW1 (0171-369 1731) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Thu 3pm, Sat 5pm (no perfs 22 Dec-5 Jan) ends 1 Feb, £8-£25. 110 mins.

Tommy
Shaftesbury Theatre Shaftesbury Avenue WC2 (0171-379 5399) ⊖ Holborn/Tottenham Court Road. Mon-Thu 8pm, Fri & Sat 8.30pm, mats Fri 5.30pm, Sat 3pm (23 Dec, 5pm & 8pm, 24 Dec, 5pm only, no perf 25 Dec) £10.50-£30. 135 mins.

The White Devil
John Webster's violent Jacobean thriller. *Barbican: The Pit* Barbican Centre EC2 (0171-638 8891) ⊖ Barbican/Moorgate. In rep, 21, 23, 26-28, 30-31 Dec, 7.15pm, mats 21 & 28 Dec, 2pm, ends 29 Mar, £10-£17.

Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?
Albee's manipulative tragi-comedy starring Diana Rigg and David Suchet. *Aldwych Theatre* Aldwych WC2 (0171-416 6003/cc 836 2428) ⊖ Holborn. Mon-Sat 7.15pm, mats Sat 2.15pm (no perfs 23-26 Dec, 31 Dec, 5pm only) £7.50-£25. 175 mins.

The Witches
A boy and his grandmother join forces against the witches in David Wood's adaptation of Roald Dahl's novel. *Vaudeville Theatre* Strand WC2 (0171-836 9987) ⊖ Charing Cross. Mon-Sat 7pm (not 24 Dec) mats Tue-Fri 2pm, Sat 11am & 2pm (extra mats 24 & 31 Dec, 11am, 23-24 & 31 Dec, 2pm) £9.50-£18, child £6.50-£12. 120 mins.

The Woman In Black
Fortune Theatre Russell St WC2 (0171-836 2238/cc 344 4444) ⊖ Covent Garden/Holborn. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Tue 3pm, Sat 4pm (24 Dec, 3pm & 7pm, no perf 25 Dec, 26 Dec, 8pm only, 27 Dec, 3pm & 8pm) £8.50-£20. 110 mins.

LONDON FRINGE

ALMEIDA THEATRE
A Midsummer Night's Dream Angela Thorne as Titania in Jonathan Miller's production. Almeida Street N1 (0171-359 4404) ⊖ Angel. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Sat 3pm (no perfs 24-26 Dec, 31 Dec-1 Jan), ends 1 Feb, £6.50-£19.50, concs available.

DRILL HALL ARTS CENTRE
Dick Daredevil New musical about science fiction radio adventures of the '40s. Chenies St WC1 (0171-637 8270) ⊖ Goodge St. Tue-Sun 7.30pm, ends 18 Jan, £7-£14.

GATE THEATRE
Swanwhite Strindberg's haunting and erotic fairy tale about a girl's battle against her *step-mother*. Pembridge Road W11 (0171-229 0706) ⊖ Notting Hill Gate: 21 Dec, 7.30pm, £10, concs £6.

THE GRACE THEATRE
Guards! Guards! First staging of one of *Terry Pratchett's comic Discworld novels*. Battersea Park Road SW11 (0171-223 3549) BR: Clapham Junction. Dly 8pm (not 24-26, 31 Dec, 6 Jan), mats Sat & Sun 4pm, ends 11 Jan, £8, concs £6, pay what you can Tues.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE
The Eleventh Commandment David Schneider stars in his own comedy about a Jewish estate agent with mother trouble. Avenue Road NW3 (0171-722 9301) ⊖ Swiss Cottage. Mon-Sat 8pm, mats Sat 3.30pm (no perfs 24 & 25 Dec), £11 (Tue-Fri), £13.50 (Sat eve), Mon & mats £8.

LYRIC STUDIO
The Truman Capote Talk Show Bob Kingdom's one-man recreation of the American writer centres on his fall from grace. In rep, 21, 23, 28, 30 Dec, 8pm, mats 26 Dec, 2 Jan, 4.30pm, ends 11 Jan, £8.50, concs £5, all seats Mon £5.
Dylan Thomas: Return Journey Anthony Hopkins directs Bob Kingdom in a portrait of the Welsh writer. King Street W6 (0181-741 2311) ⊖ Hammersmith. In rep, 26-27, 31 Dec, 2-3 Jan, 8pm, mats 21 & 28 Dec, 4.30pm, ends 11 Jan, £6.50, concs £5, all seats Mon £5.

ORANGE TREE THEATRE
Family Circles Wedding anniversary chaos ensues in the 25th anniversary revival of Ayckbourn's comedy. Clarence St, Richmond (0181-940 3633) ⊖ Richmond. Mon-Sat 7.45pm (not 23-26 Dec, 1 Jan), mats Sat 4pm, 27 Dec, 4pm, £9-£14.50, concs available.

WHITE BEAR THEATRE
Women And Wallace/Cowboy Mouth Suburban dark comedy and Sam Shepard's surreal homage to rock. Kennington Pk Road SE11 (0171-793 9193) ⊖ Kennington. 21 & 22 Dec, 7.30pm, ends 22 Dec, £6, concs £4.

WIMBLEDON STUDIO
Hamlet Shakespeare's drama enlivened with film, video and recordings by Fecund. The Broadway, SW19 (0181-542 6141) ⊖ Wimbledon. 21 Dec, 7.30pm, £6, concs £4.

REGIONAL THEATRE

BASINGSTOKE
HAYMARKET THEATRE
Aspects Of Love A student falls for a French actress in *Lloyd Webber's* musical. Mon-Sat 7.45pm (24 & 26 Dec, 7pm), mats 21, 28, 31 Dec, 3pm, ends 11 Jan, £10-£15.50. Wote Street (01256-465566)

BRISTOL
NEW VIC STUDIO
The Last Yankee Arthur Miller's drama about ordinary Americans struggling to make sense of their country. Mon-Wed 7.30pm, Thu-Sat 8pm, mats 21, 26, 28 Dec (no perfs 24-25 Dec), ends 18 Jan, £9, concs £5. King Street (0117-987 7877)

CHICHESTER
MINERVA THEATRE
The Life And Adventures Of Nicholas Nickleby David Edgar's adaptation of Dickens is performed by Chichester Festival Youth Theatre. From 23 Dec, 23, 27, 30 Dec, 2 & 3 Jan, 6pm, mats 24, 28, 29, 31 Dec & 4 Jan, 2pm, ends 4 Jan, £7. *Oaklands Park (01243-781312)*

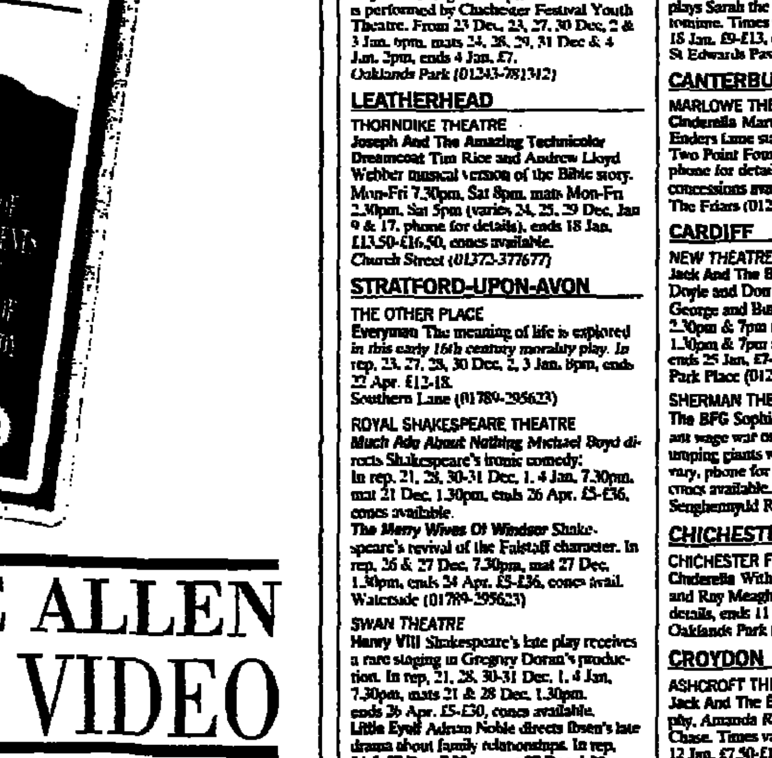
LEATHERHEAD
THORNDIKE THEATRE
Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber musical version of the Bible story. Mon-Fri 7.30pm, Sat 8pm, mats Mon-Fri 2.30pm, Sat 5pm (varies 24, 25, 29 Dec, Jan 9 & 17, phone for details), ends 18 Jan, £13.50-£16.50, concs available. *Church Street (01372-377677)*

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
THE OTHER PLACE
Everyman The meaning of life is explored *in this early 16th century morality play*. In rep, 23, 27, 28, 30 Dec, 2, 3 Jan, 8pm, ends 22 Apr, £12-18. Southern Lane (01789-295623)

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
Much Ado About Nothing Michael Boyd directs Shakespeare's ironic comedy. In rep, 21, 28, 30-31 Dec, 1, 4 Jan, 7.30pm, mat 21 Dec, 1.30pm, ends 26 Apr, £5-£36, concs available.
The Merry Wives Of Windsor Shakespeare's revival of the Falstaff character. In rep, 26 & 27 Dec, 7.30pm, mat 27 Dec, 1.30pm, ends 24 Apr, £5-£36, concs avail. Waterside (01789-295623)

SWAN THEATRE
Henry VIII Shakespeare's late play receives a rare staging in Gregory Doran's production. In rep, 21, 28, 30-31 Dec, 1, 4 Jan, 7.30pm, mats 21 & 28 Dec, 1.30pm, ends 26 Apr, £5-£30, concs available.
Little Eyolf Adrian Noble directs Ibsen's late drama about family relationships. In rep, 26 & 27 Dec, 7.30pm, mat 27 Dec, 1.30pm, ends 24 Apr, £5-£30, concs available. Waterside (01789-295623)

THE GODFATHER OF COMEDY



PolyGram Video

VINTAGE DAVE ALLEN
OUT NOW ON VIDEO

Pantomime

ALBANY THEATRE
Jack And The Beanstalk South London-set, *multicultural 'panto with attitude'* from London Bubble. Douglas Way SE8 (0181-692 4446) ⊖ New Cross/BR: Deptford & New Cross. times vary, phone for details, ends 4 Jan, £9.50, concs £5.

GREENWICH THEATRE
Huckleberry Finn Matthew Francis' adaptation of Mark Twain's story of a boy escaping society by sailing down the Mississippi. Crooms Hill SE10 (0181-858 7755) BR: Greenwich. Mon-Sat 7.45pm, mats Sat 2.30pm, *ends 25 Jan, £7.75-£16.50, concs &* child concs available.

HACKNEY EMPIRE
Goldilocks And The Three Bears Paul Bradley from EastEnders stars alongside Judith Jacob and Charlie Cairoli. Mare Street E8 (0181-985 2424) BR: Hackney Central. Times vary, phone for details, ends 5 Jan, phone for prices.

LEWISHAM THEATRE
Peter Pan Peter Duncan and Diane Louise Jordan star with Jon Iles from The Bill. Rushey Green SE6 (0181-690 0002) BR: Catford Bridge. Times vary, phone for details, ends 19 Jan, £8.95-£9.95, concs £5.95-£6.95, groups £5.75-£6.75.

THEATRE ROYAL, STRATFORD EAST
Beauty And The Beast Wicked fairies and money-grabbing ugly sisters feature in this seasonal pantomime. Gerry Raffles Square E15 (0181-534 0310) BR/⊖ Stratford. Times vary (most perfs 2.15pm & 7.15pm), phone for details, ends 25 Jan, £5-£25, concs £2.50-£12.50.

REGIONAL PANTOMIME

BASINGSTOKE
THE ANVIL
Dick Whittington Hinge and Bracket star with Buster Merryfield from Only Fools And Horses. Times vary, phone for details, ends 5 Jan, £9.50-£13.50, concs available. Churchill Way (01256-844244)

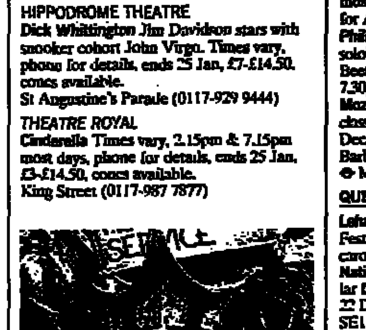
BATH
THEATRE ROYAL
Cinderella EastEnders' Patsy Palmer joins Derek Nimmo, Ross King and Bella Emberg. Tue-Sat 2pm & 7pm, Sun 1pm & 5pm, 23 & 30 Dec, 2pm & 7pm (no perf 25 Dec & 2 Jan), ends 26 Jan, £4-£14, concs avail. Sawclose (01225-448844/cc 448861)

BOURNEMOUTH
PAVILION THEATRE
Dick Whittington Paul Daniels stars with Debbie McGee. Mon-Sat 7pm, mat times vary, phone for details, ends 19 Jan, £8.50-£10.50, concs available. Westover Road (01202-297297)

BRIGHTON
THEATRE ROYAL
Snow White & The Seven Dwarfs Nichola McAuliffe of TV's Surgical Spirit stars as The Wicked Queen. Times vary, 2.30pm & 7.30pm most days, phone for details, ends *11 Jan, £6-£11.50*, concs available. New Road (01273-328488)

BRISTOL
HIPPODROME THEATRE
Dick Whittington Jim Davidson stars with snooker cohort John Virgo. Times vary, phone for details, ends 25 Jan, £7-£14.50, concs available. St Augustine's Parade (0117-929 9444)

THEATRE ROYAL
Cinderella Times vary, 2.15pm & 7.15pm most days, phone for details, ends 25 Jan, £3-£14.50, concs available. King Street (0117-987 7877)



Danny La Rue is Widow Twanky at Sheffield's Lyceum

BROMLEY
CHURCHILL THEATRE
Mother Goose Ronnie Corbett plays Dame for the first time. Times vary, 2.30pm & 7.30pm most days until 7 Jan, then 4.15pm & 7.30pm *most days, phone for details*, ends 19 Jan, £9-£14, concs available. High Street (0181-460 6677)

CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE ARTS THEATRE
Dick Whittington And His Cat Barry Cryer plays Sarah the Cook in this feline pantomime. Times vary, phone for details, ends 18 Jan, £9-£13, concs available. St Edwards Passage (01223-503333)

CANTERBURY
MARLOWE THEATRE
Cinderella Martine McCutcheon of EastEnders fame stars with John Pickard of Two Point Four Children. Times vary, phone for details, ends 12 Jan, £7-£13.50, concessions available. The Friars (01227-787787)

CARDIFF
NEW THEATRE
Jack And The Beanstalk Su Pollard, Mike Doyle and Don Maclean star with Zippy, George and Bungle in support. Times vary, 2.30pm & 7pm most days until 4 Jan, then 1.30pm & 7pm most days, phone for details, ends 25 Jan, £7-£12.50, concs available. Park Place (01222-878889)

SHERMAN THEATRE
The BFG Sophie and The Big Friendly Giant wage war on trogglehumping, bogthumping giants who eat children. Times vary, phone for details, ends 11 Jan, £6-£10, concs available. Senghennydd Road (01222-230451)

CHICHESTER
CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE
Cinderella With Bobby Davro, Dora Bryan and Ray Meagher. Times vary, phone for details, ends 11 Jan, £8-£15, concs available. Oaklands Park (01243-781312)

CROYDON
ASHCROFT THEATRE
Jack And The Beanstalk With Glen Murphy, Amanda Redington and Lorraine Chase. Times vary, phone for details, ends 12 Jan, £7.50-£13, concs available. Fairfield Halls, Park Lane (0181-688 9291)

NORWICH
THEATRE ROYAL
Jack And The Beanstalk Karl Howman plays Fleshcreep with Toyah Wilcox, Desmond Barrit and Mark Curry in support. Tue-Sat 7.30pm, Sun 6pm, 22 Dec, 7.30pm (no perf 24 & 25 Dec), mats Tue-Sun 2.30pm until 5 Jan, then varies, ends 25 Jan, £2-£11.50, concs available. Theatre Street (01603-630000)

OXFORD
APOLLO THEATRE
Pickwick: The Christmas Musical Dickensian frolics with Harry Secombe and Linda Baron. From 23 Dec, times vary, phone for details, ends 1 Feb, £7-£23.50. George Street (01865-244544)

PLAYHOUSE THEATRE
Dick Whittington And His Cat The Flying Pickets' Brian Hibbard stars with Radio Active's Michael Fenton-Stevens. Times vary (2pm & 7pm most days), phone for details, ends 12 Jan, £5-£14, concs available. Beaumont Street (01865-798600)

PLYMOUTH
THEATRE ROYAL
Dick Whittington Lesley Joseph, John Nettles, Jeffrey Holand and Nicholas Parsons star. Mon-Sat 2.30pm & 7.30pm, Sun 3pm, 31 Dec, 1pm & 6pm (no perfs 24 & 25 Dec, 1, 6 Jan) ends 1 Feb, £8-£14.50, concs available. Royal Parade (01752-267222)

SOUTHAMPTON
MAYFLOWER THEATRE
Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs Lionel Blair and Britt Ekland star. Tue-Sat & 23 & 30 Dec, 7pm, mats Wed 2.30pm, Sun 1pm & 5.15pm (no perf 25 Dec, 1 Jan), ends 9 Feb, £7.50-£15, concs available. Commercial Road (01703-711811)

SWANSEA
GRAND THEATRE
Robin Hood Comic duo Little and Large star with Hi-De-Hi's Ruth Madoc and Emmerdale's Mark Cameron in support. Times vary, phone for details, ends 2 Feb, £8-£11.75, concs available. Singleton Street (01792-475715)

WINDSOR
THEATRE ROYAL
Cinderella Starring Dennis Waterman and Wendy Craig. Times vary, phone for details, ends 11 Jan, £5.50-£18. Thames Street (01753-853888)

YEOVIL
OCTAGON THEATRE
Jack And The Beanstalk Rainbow favourites George, Zippy and Bungle star with Geoffrey Hayes. *Mon-Sat* 2.30pm & 7pm (no eve perf 24 & 31 Dec), 29 Dec, 3pm, 4 Jan, 1.30pm) ends 4 Jan, £8.50-£9.50, concs available. Hendford (01935-22884)

Classical

BARBICAN HALL
LSO/Rutter Christmas Carol Concert also including other seasonal music. 21 Dec, 8pm & 22 Dec, 3.30pm. £6-£25.
London Concert Orchestra/Watson Festive music by a range of composers and Carols for All. 23 Dec, 7.30pm. £8.50-£22.50.
Philharmonia/Inglis *Daniel Hope is the* soloist in Bruch's Violin Concerto with Beethoven's Eroica Symphony. 26 Dec, 7.30pm. £9.50-£27.50.
Mozart Festival Orchestra/Watson Baroque classics including Vivaldi's Four Seasons. 27 Dec, 3pm & 30 Dec, 7.30pm. £9.50-£26.50. Barbican Centre, EC2 (0171-638 8891) ⊖ Moorgate/Barbican.

QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL
Lehar Schrammel Ensemble & Choir/Leach Festive works from Austria and traditional carols. 21 Dec, 7.45pm. £6.50-£12.
National Children's Orchestra/Metters Popular favourites including Bizet's Carmen Suite. 22 Dec, 7.45pm. £5-£10. South Bank Centre, SE1 (0171-960 4242) BR/⊖ Waterloo.

ROYAL ALBERT HALL
London Concert Orchestra/Jonathan Cohen Christmas carol singalong with surprise guests. 21 Dec, 3pm. £7.50-£22.50.
Philharmonia/Wright With Goldsmith's Choral Union in Handel's Messiah. 21 Dec, 7.30pm & 22 Dec, 8pm. £7.50-£27.50.
Mozart Festival Orchestra/Watson An array of Christmas music and carols. 22 Dec. 7.30pm. £6.50-£22.50.
King's Singers Christmas/Ian Watson Carols and Christmas Music from many lands. 23 Dec, 7.30pm. £7.50-£27.50.
Mozart Festival Orchestra/Ian Watson Baroque Christmas favourites and carols. 24 Dec, 2.30pm. £7.50-£22.50.
London Concert Orchestra/Philip Simms Christmas music and readings. 24 Dec, 7pm. £7.50-£22.50. Kensington Gore, SW7 (0171-589 8212) ⊖ High Street Kensington.

Opera

LONDON

LONDON COLISEUM: ENO
The Mikado Jonathan Miller's popular production of G & S, revived by David Ritch, conducted by John Pryce-Jones. 6 Jan, 7.30pm. £6.50-£55.
The Pearl Fishers Acclaimed staging of Bizet's Ceylon-set opera, originally directed by Philip Prowse. 7, 10 Jan, 7.30pm. £6.50-£55. St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-632 8300) ⊖ Leicester Square/Charing Cross.

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE: RO
Turandot Conducted by Daniele Gatti, with Sharon Sweet in the title role. 21 & 30 Dec, 2 & 6 Jan. 7.30pm. £5-£130. Covent Garden, WC2 (0171-304 4000) ⊖ Covent Garden.

Clubs

LONDON

SATURDAY 21
BAGLEYS Freedom Freestyle night of house, garage, handbag, acid jazz and beyond with Nancy Noise, Blu Peter and Dean Savonne. York Way N1 (0171-278 2777) ⊖ Kings Cross. 10pm-8am, £12, mems £8, £5/£4 after 4am.
BLUE NOTE Athletico Jazz breaks, bleeps, beats and crazy visuals with Alex Sparrow and Kirstie McAra. Hoxton Square N1 (0171-729 8440) ⊖ Old Street. 10pm-5am, £10.
THE END Spooky Ambient techno with an acid coating from Trixta and Matt Handy. West Central Street WC1 (0171-419 9199) ⊖ *Tottenham Court Road/Holborn*. 11pm-6am, £12, mems £10.
GARDENING CLUB Christmas Karaoke Special Uplifting house and karaoke frolics with Jeremy Healy and James Mac. The Piazza WC2 (0171-497 3153/4) ⊖ Covent Garden. 10pm-6am, £13, mems £11.
LEISURE LOUNGE Metalheadz Goldie's d&b session. Holborn EC1 (0171-242 1345) ⊖ Holborn. 10pm-4am, £12, mems £8.
MARS BAR Naked Lisa Pin Up, Craig Jensen and others playing the choicest house in the nude. Sutton Row W1 (0171-439 4655) ⊖ Tottenham Court Road. 10pm-5am, £7 before 11pm, more after.
MINISTRY OF SOUND Rulin' With Erick Morillo (Reel to Real), Gareth Cook and Jazzy M. Gaunt Street SE1 (0171-378 6528) ⊖ Elephant and Castle. 12midnight-9am, £15, mems £10.
ROCKET 3001: A Bass Odyssey Winter Solstice and Dub Celebration bringing Zion Train, The Ruts DC, DJs, Web sites and visuals under one roof. Holloway Road N7 (0171-607 2789) ⊖ Holloway Road. 10pm-6am, £12, adv £10.

SUNDAY 22
THE AQUARIUM Absolute Sunday Soulful garage in two large rooms with resident DJ Mickey Simms, swimming pool, jacuzzi and beach party. Old St EC1 (0171-251 6136) ⊖ *Old Street. 7pm-12am, £7, mems £5.*
THE SPITZ Transatlantic House, funk, reggae drum'n'bass and beyond from Tony Johnson of Transatlantic at this relaxer. Commercial Street E1 (0171-247 9747) ⊖ *Liverpool Street. 6pm-12pm, £3.*

TUESDAY 24
THE ARCHES Starsky and Hutch Retro funk and disco session. Southwark Street SE1 (0171-207 2980) ⊖ London Bridge. 9pm-4am, £35, adv £30, mems £25.
THE GARDENING CLUB Pinch's White Christmas Party Drum'n'bass with Fabio Paras and guests. The Piazza WC2 (0171-497 3153/4) ⊖ Covt Gn. 10pm-2.30am, £5, mems/NUS £3, £3 with flyer before 9pm.

THURSDAY 26
BLUE NOTE The Surgery Party Pure soul from the '60s to the present with Bob Jones (Kiss FM) and CJ (SSA). Hoxton Square N1 (0171-729 8440) ⊖ Old Street. 10pm-3am, £8, concs £6.
THE DUB CLUB Emperor Freedom Sound System Intoxicating roots and dub revival. Junction Rd N19 (0181-340 9012) ⊖ Tufnell Pk. 9pm-1am, £4.50, £3.50 before 10pm.

FRIDAY 27
BLUE NOTE Magic Bus Soulful jazz, hip hop and dub from Eddie Pillier (Jazz FM) and The Mash Brothers (Focus). Hoxton Square N1 (0171-729 8440) ⊖ Old Street. 10pm-5am, £8, concs £6.
THE FRIDGE Science Fiction Unearthly techno and trance from Psychaos, Sid Shanti and resident astronauts. Town Hall Parade, Brixton Hill SW2 (0171-326 5100) BR: Brixton. 10pm-6am, £8 in adv.
MINISTRY OF SOUND Frisky Paul Oakenfold, Plastic Fantastic, Euro and Johnny Orange. Gaunt St SE1 (0171-378 6528) ⊖ Elephant & Castle. 10.30pm-6am, £10, mems £6.

Pop & jazz

LONDON

SATURDAY 21
Abba Gold Tribute band. *Mean Fiddler* Harlesden High Street NW10 (0181-961 5490) BR: Willesden Junction. 8pm, £6.
Corduroy Acid Jazz-affiliated soulboys with a teen-pop past. *Jazz Cafe* Parkway NW1 (0171-916 6060) ⊖ Camden Town. 7pm, £10-£12.
El Vez, Bikini Beach Band Full-on showbiz from the glittery Mexican Elvis, with Hawaiian covers band BBB. *Garage* Highbury Corner N5 (0171-607 1818) ⊖ Highbury & Islington. 8pm, £7.
Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra Boogie-woogie obsessed media darling and his 15-piece R&B troupe. *Shepherd's Bush Empire* Shepherd's Bush Green W12 (0181-740 7474) ⊖ Shepherd's Bush. 7pm, £14.50.
Tom Jones Sixties MOR pop giant. *London Arena* Limeharbour E14 (0171-538 1212) DLR: Cross Harbour. 6.30pm, £19-£21.
George Melly The Gary Glitter of trad jazz. *Ronnie Scott's* Frith Street W1 (0171-439 0747) ⊖ Leicester Square. 9pm, ends 4 Jan, £12, mems £7.
The Men They Couldn't Hang Reunited English folk-rockers. *Borderline* Manette Street W1 (0171-734 2095) ⊖ Tottenham Court Road. 8pm, £8.
Mogwai, AMP Krautrock-influenced Glaswegian drone-rockers. *Ross Leopard* Battersea Wharf, Queenstown Road SW8 (0171-498 0548) BR: Battersea Pk. 8.30pm, £5, concs £4, £3 after 11.30pm.
Zion Train, Ruts DC *Dub clash featuring festival-friendly crusties ZT and Seventies* punky reggae rockers the Ruts. *Rocket* Holloway Road N7 (0171-607 2789) ⊖ Holloway Road. 10pm-6am, £10-£12.

SUNDAY 22
Marc Almond Soft Cell's torch singing pop dramatist, fresh from his duet with PJ Proby. *Palladium* Argyll Street W1 (0171-494 5020/5038) ⊖ Oxford Circus. 8pm, £12.50-£17.50.
Christmas Seisun Irish folk jam with piper Declan Masterson and bodhran player Johnnie McDonagh from Riverdance, plus Steafan Hannigan, Teresa Heanne and James O'Grady. *Hammersmith & Fulham Irish Centre* Blacks Road W6 (0181-563 8232) ⊖ Hammersmith. 8pm, £6, concs £5.
El Vez, Baby Birkin Full-on showbiz from the glittery Mexican Elvis, with top French pop from Jane Birkin tribute band BB. *Garage* Highbury Corner N5 (0171-607 1818) ⊖ Highbury & Islington. 8pm, £7.
Peter Green Legendary blues guitarist at the helm of Fleetwood Mac in the Sixties. *Empire* Shepherd's Bush Green W12 (0181-740 7474) ⊖ Shepherd's Bush. 7pm, £12.50.
Jam Session #8 With the cream of London's acid jazzers. *Jazz Cafe* Parkway NW1 (0171-916 6060) ⊖ Camden Town. 7pm, £7.
Louis Moholo/Elton Dean/Claude Deppa/Pule Pheto/Jibo Pheto South African-tinged freeform jazz session. *Vortex* Church Street N16 (0171-254 6516) BR: Stoke Newington. 8.30pm, £5, concs £4.
Beth Orton, The Hybirds, Famous Times Funky folk singer-songwriting with a contemporary dance sheen from the much talked about Orton, heading a Heavenly Records bill of psychedelic rockers the Hybirds and ex-Rockingbirds country-rockers FT. *Mean Fiddler* Harlesden High St NW10 (0181-961 5490) BR: Willesden Junction. 5pm, £6.
Osibisa Afro-funk team of the Seventies. *Half Moon* Lower Richmond Rd SW15 (0181-780 9383) ⊖ Putney Bridge. 8pm, £8-£9.

MONDAY 23
East 17, Gabrielle East London swingbeat boys with guest appearance from recent collaborator Gabrielle. *Wembley Arena* Empire Way (0181-900 1234) ⊖ Wembley Park. 6.30pm, £16.
Tony Hadley Crooning from the Spandau Ballet man. *Jazz Cafe* Parkway, Camden NW1 (0171-916 6060) ⊖ Camden Town. 7pm, £10-£12.
Gina Harkell Quartet Pastoral-edged contemporary jazz songstress. *Pizza on the Park* Knightsbridge SW1 (0171-235 5273) ⊖ Hyde Park Corner. 9pm, £12.
Huge Baby, Asian Dub Foundation Leftfield hard rock from HB, with Eastern-influenced dub and techno team ADF. *Blue Note* Hoxton Sq N1 (0171-729 8440) ⊖ Old St. 9pm, £5, £3 concs/before 11pm.
Jazz'n'Voices Christmas Gala Concert Jazz, gospel, funk and rap session. *Purcell Room* South Bank Centre SE1 (0171-960 4242) BR/⊖ Waterloo. 8pm, £10.
George Melly See Saturday. *Ronnie Scott's* 9pm, £12, NUS £7, mems £4.
The Pod, Ricky Spontane, I Ludicrous, Garbo Po-faced techno pastiche from the headliners. *Bull & Gate* Kentish Town Road NW5 (0171-485 5358) ⊖ Kentish Town. 8.30pm, £3.50.

TUESDAY 24
The Brotherhood, Blak Twang, Cut Master Swift, Phoebe 1 UK rap showcase. *Subterania* Acklam Road W10 (0181-960 4590) ⊖ Ladbroke Grove. 9pm, £6.50.
London Community Gospel Choir Basil Meade's inspirational funk and soul choir. *Jazz Cafe* Parkway, NW1 (0171-916 6060) ⊖ Camden Town. 7pm, £12.50, adv £10.
George Melly See Saturday. *Ronnie Scott's* 9pm, £12, NUS £7, mems £4.
The Popes Celtic folk-rock from Shane MacGowan's band. *Hammersmith & Fulham Irish Centre* Blacks Road W6 (0181-563 8232) ⊖ Hammersmith. 8pm, £6, *concs £5.*

THURSDAY 26
Nat Gonella/Beryl Bryden/Digby Fairweather Christmas Party Trad and swing party with veteran Gonella, blues queen Bryden and trumpeter Fairweather. *Purcell Room* South Bank Centre SE1 (0171-960 4242) BR/⊖ Waterloo. 7.30pm, £6.50-£11.50, concs available.
George Melly See Saturday. *Ronnie Scott's* 9pm, £12, NUS £7, mems £4.
Silver Sun Rising new indie guitar band. *Camden Palace* Camden High Street NW1 (0171-387 0428) ⊖ Camden. 9pm, £5.

FRIDAY 27
Dominic Alldis Quartet Jazz crooner and pianist plays the Bill Evans songbook. *Bull's Head* Lonsdale Road SW13 (0181-876 5241) BR: Barnes Bridge. 8pm, £5.
Dr Feelgood Southend R&B outfit dating back to pub-rock days. *Half Moon* Lower Richmond Road SW15 (0181-780 9383) ⊖ Putney Bridge. 8pm, £6.
The Glenn Miller Orchestra UK John Watson's incarnation of the wartime bigband. *Barbican Hall* Barbican Centre EC2 (0171-638 8891) ⊖ Barbican. 7.30pm, £9.50-£21.
High Priest Safroman Zairean rhythm guitarist and band. *Africa Centre* King Street WC2 (0171-312 1996) ⊖ Covent Garden. 9pm, £6-£7.
The Hurdy-Gurdy Man's Alternative Christmas Traditional Christmas music plus Celtic folk tunes and more. *Purcell Room* South Bank SE1 (0171-960 4242) BR/⊖ Waterloo. 7.30pm, £6-£9.
George Melly See Saturday. *Ronnie Scott's* 9pm, £12, NUS £7, mems £4.
Misty In Roots UK roots reggae institution. *Watermans* High St, Brentford (0181-568 1176) ⊖ Gunnersbury. 10.30pm, £9-£12.
Moose Downbeat, Country-flavoured introspection from the shoegazing veterans. *Garage* Highbury Corner N5 (0171-607 1818/cc 344 0044) ⊖ Highbury & Islington. 8pm, £5.
James Taylor Quartet Hammond-led funk. *Jazz Cafe* Parkway NW1 (0171-916 6060) ⊖ Camden. 7pm, ends 31 Dec, £13.50-£15.
Yeah London indie band featuring Jon Moss of Culture Club. *Dublin Castle* Parkway NW1 (0171-485 1773) ⊖ Camden Town. 9pm, £4, concs £3.

Dance

LONDON

LONDON COLISEUM
The Kirov Ballet: The Nutcracker British premiere of the Kirov version. 21, 23-24, 26-28, 31 Dec, 1-4 Jan, 7.30pm, mats 21, 23-24, 26-28 Dec, 1-4 Jan, 2.30pm, 31 Dec, 2pm. £12.50-£49.50. *St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-632 8300)* ⊖ Leicester Square/Charing Cross.

PICCADILLY THEATRE
Adventures In Motion Pictures: Swan Lake Matthew Bourne's acclaimed erotic version featuring an innovative all-male corps of swans. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, mats Wed & Sat & 2 Jan, 2.30pm, (no mat 1 Jan, no perfs 24-25 Dec). £9.50-£30, standby concs available. Denman Street, W1 (0171-369 1734) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus.

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
English National Ballet: The Nutcracker Ben Stevenson's version of the traditional and much-loved Christmas ballet. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm (no perfs 24 & 25 Dec), mats 21, 23-24, 26-28, 30-31 Dec, 1-4, 8, 11 Jan, 2.30pm, ends 11 Jan. £8-£35. South Bank, SE1 (0171-960 4242) ⊖ Waterloo.

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
Royal Ballet: Cinderella Frederick Ashton's production of Prokofiev. 23 Dec (Yoshida/Sansom), 7pm, 27 Dec (Bussell/ Cope), 7.30pm, mat 24 Dec (Bussell/Cope), 12pm, *27 Dec (Yoshida/Sansom) 2.30pm*. £2-£62. Covent Garden, WC2 (0171-304 4000) ⊖ Covent Garden.

Comedy

LONDON

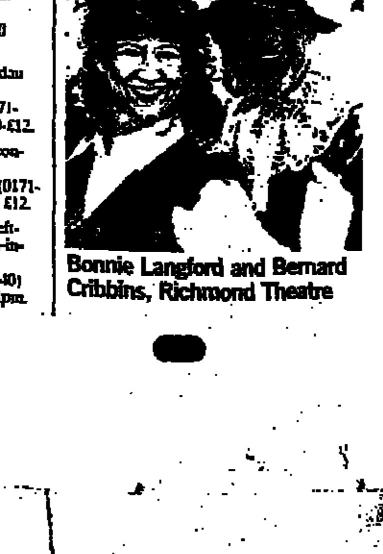
SATURDAY 21
COMEDY STORE Best In Stand Up Fred MacAulay, Ian Stone, Alan Davies, *Bill* Bailey and Dominic Holland. Oxendon Street SW1 (01426-914433) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. 8pm, £10.
FINNEGAN'S WAKE Meccano Club Steve Best, Kevin Day and *Al* Murray. Essex Road N1 (0171-813 4478) ⊖ Angel. 9pm, £6, concs £5.
HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM IRISH CENTRE Christmas Craic Comedy Michael Redmond, Kevin Hayes, Noel Faulkner, music by Rigs & Reels. Blacks Road W6 (0181-563 8232) ⊖ Hammersmith. 8pm, £6, concs £5.
JONGLEURS CAMDEN Tracy Brothers, Hattie Hayridge, Phil Davey, Sean Meo and Steve Rawlings. Chalk Farm Road NW1 (0171-924 2766) ⊖ Camden Town. 7.15pm & 11.15pm, £10, £7.
PLEASANCE THEATRE Late Night Comedy Ivor Dembina, Ross Moore, Rhona Cameron and Adam Bloom. North Road, off Caledonian Road N7 (0171-609 1800/429 0180) ⊖ Caledonian Rd. 10.30pm, £5.

SUNDAY 22
COMEDY STORE Comedy Store Players Jim Sweeney, Richard Vranch, Tony Hawks, Andy Smart and Josie Lawrence. Oxendon Street SW1 (01426-914433) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. 8pm, £10.

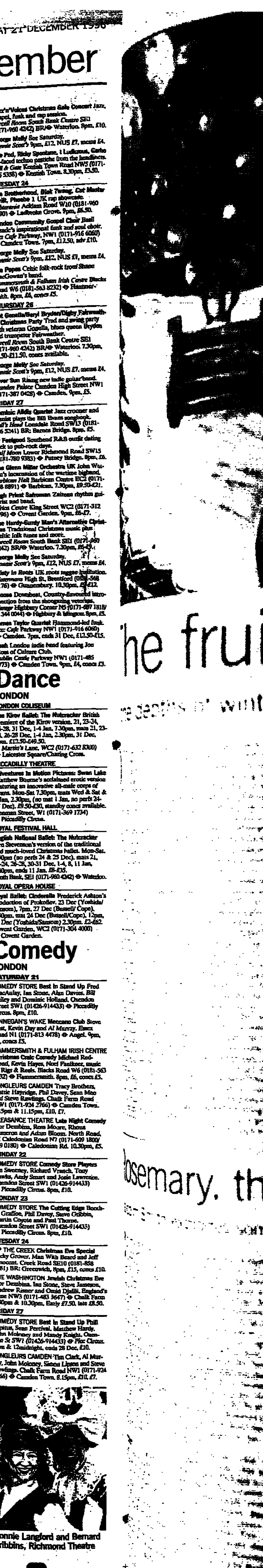
MONDAY 23
COMEDY STORE The Cutting Edge Boothby Graffoe, Phil Davey, Steve Gribbin, Martin Coyote and Paul Thorne. Oxendon Street SW1 (01426-914433) ⊖ Piccadilly Circus. 8pm, £10.

TUESDAY 24
UP THE CREEK Christmas Eve Special Ricky Grover, Man With Beard and Jeff Innocent. Creek Road SE10 (0181-858 4581) BR: Greenwich, 8pm, £15, concs £10.
THE WASHINGTON Jewish Christmas Eve Ivor Dembina, Ian Stone, Steve Jameson, Andrew Risner and Omid Djalili. England's Lane NW3 (0171-483 3647) ⊖ Chalk Farm. 7.30pm & 10.30pm. Early £7.50, late £8.50.

FRIDAY 27
COMEDY STORE Best In Stand Up Phill Jupitus, Sean Percival, Matthew Hardy, John Moloney and Mandy Knight. *Oxendon St SW1 (01426-914433)* ⊖ *Picc Circus.* 8pm & 12midnight, ends 28 Dec, £10.
JONGLEURS CAMDEN Tim Clark, Al Murray, John Moloney, Simon Lipson and Steve Rawlings. Chalk Farm Road NW1 (0171-924 2766) ⊖ Camden Town. *8.15pm, £10, £7.*



Bonnie Langford and Bernard Cribbins, Richmond Theatre



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CATHERINE DONALDSON

The fruit of Christmas

In the depths of winter, oranges glow like small suns. By Anna Pavord

Oranges were what made Christmas special for my mother, who was brought up, one of a dozen children, on her family's farm in Wales. I never knew her father, who died before I was born, but he lived vividly through her stories. As a young man, he set sail for the States with four pedigree Hereford bulls as his fortune. He returned with a 10-gallon hat and a pair of Colt pistols to sweep my rather refined Herefordshire grandmother off her feet and into the wilds of the Welsh border country.

His hat hung in our cloakroom all through my childhood, stiff as chipboard, worn completely through in one crease of the crown. Once, I came across my brother standing in front of the hall mirror with the hat on his head, but I could tell from the look on his face that he knew it was, in every respect, too big for him.

By the time the vast family was marshalled in 1918 in front of a photographer's studio backdrop (improbably painted with a scene from classical Italy), my grandfather had mellowed into an Edwardian paterfamilias, broad-shouldered, bearded, the spitting image of the Prince of Wales. But even at this benevolent stage, my mother remembered him each Christmas Eve, driving the gig at a brilliantly reckless pace back from the local market town, with presents for all hidden under a rug. And crates of oranges, which never appeared at any other time in their lives.

They can scarcely be called treats now, but I still think of oranges as particularly Christmassy fruit. They taste better during this season than at any other time of the year. The colour is right, too. Oranges glow like small suns in the depths of the winter solstice.

Unlike the sort of fruit that we are more used to growing – conveyor-belt stuff which blossoms at one end of the growing season and fruits at the other – oranges peak in one outrageous burst: scented blossom and ripe fruit all at the same time. And all at the lowest ebb of the year, when we are most in need of a treat.

I haven't got the right kind of place to overwinter citrus trees (they hate frost), or else I'd have bought some long ago. I can't think of anything I'd like better in the dining room at Christmas than orange trees, soberly leafed, the glossy fruit hanging like baubles from the branches. And imagine the swoony smell.

Imagine is all I can do for the moment. But when I get those trees, they will be planted in big clay pots and set inside the square wooden boxes called Versailles tubs. The most practical kind have one side that lets down, so you can get the pots in and out easily. Mine will have wheels, too, to ease the annual pilgrimage from winter glass to summer sunshine. Citrus trees don't like being under cover the whole time, as early growers soon discovered.

But though we haven't got the trees, I buy the fruit, like my grandfather, by the crate. Christmas oranges are piled up in a pyramid on the window ledge by the back door. They are set in rows along the mantelshelves among mounds of silvered ivy acting as holders for smallish red candles, set in a ring round the table centrepiece. They are wired on to the swags of greenery that hang down the side of the windows in the kitchen and the dining room.

The house fills, not with the scent of the flowers but with the more complex smell of the faintly oily peel. And then, as New Year comes, this changes to a whiff of mould, as the oranges being used as candle holders start quietly to rot. "So symbolic," said a friend at a New Year's lunch, as she gazed transfixed at one of these mouldering fruit, sagging under the weight of its candle.

Nobody has done so spectacularly well out of oranges as Nell Gwyn. She probably sold fruit shipped in from Portugal, where it had been introduced earlier from Ceylon. Of course, it was a seasonal fruit then, appearing from the end of November onwards, when vast quantities of Portuguese oranges were brought into the London docks. But English gardeners had been trying to grow them for almost a hundred years before Gwyn stole the Drury Lane scene. The first one who succeeded was Francis Carew, who had them on his estate at Beddington, near Croydon, in about 1562.

Opinions differ about the right sort of compost to grow potted citrus trees in. Chris Dennis, who, with his wife Amanda, set up the Citrus Centre near Pulborough, West Sussex, two years ago, favours a light, soilless compost: he finds that the soil-based John Innes types dry out too slowly between waterings. But if you use a soilless compost you need to plant in big pots, not less than 2ft across.

"Watering is the key," he says. "You must let the plants dry out between each drink. Most of the citrus trees that die in this country die from drowning." The Dennises mix coarse bark with the compost to improve drainage round the roots in winter. In winter, orange trees should be kept cool and on the dryish side. In summer, the leaves can be sprayed over with a hosepipe at regular intervals.

Pests are most likely to attack while the trees are under cover. Red spider mites, whiteflies, mealybugs and scale insects all love them. If trees get infested, sooty mould soon follows on. The most troublesome time is early spring, when it is still too chilly for the trees to go outside, but their new growth is at its most juicy and attractive to pests. Out of doors, citrus trees are much less trouble, so keep them there as long as you dare.

The old-fashioned way of controlling pests on orange trees combined vigilance with soap. Head gardeners patrolled trees under cover every week. Any that showed signs of infestation were thoroughly drenched with a solution of suds. This is the best way to clean off sooty mould, too. Rub the leaves with your thumbs, gently massaging the mould away.

The modern way is to use biological controls, setting phytoseiulus against red spider, encarsia against whitefly. There are problems though. The citrus overwinter most comfortably at cool, though frost-free temperatures. The predators, particularly the Australian cryptolaemus, work and reproduce best in heat – up to 70F. And you have to let the pests build up before you introduce the predators.

Lemons, types of *Citrus limon*, are more easily grown than oranges in this country. But there are 25 different kinds of orange available from specialist nurseries, such as the Citrus Centre and Reads. For flavour, the best is undoubtedly the 'Washington Navel', introduced into the US from Brazil in 1870. Unfortunately it has a kamikaze tendency to drop all its fruit as soon as they set. For a better chance of oranges for Christmases to come, try 'Salustiana' or 'Valencia'.

The Citrus Centre is at West Mare Lane, Marehill, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 2EA (01798 872786). Open Wed-Sun (9.30am-5.30pm). Send a SAE for a catalogue. Plants can be sent by mail order or bought at the Centre.

Duff Hart-Davis The beast will progress in a cacophony of drums, shakers and tin whistles

This evening, at the winter solstice, the turning of the year, mummers in villages all over England will raise echoes from deep in our past with their raucous, ritual plays. In a hundred pubs and squares the Turkish Knight (villain) will meet St George or King George (hero): after a few bragging exchanges the two will fight; the hero will be killed, and then revived by the Quack Doctor. Finally a hideously masked figure will announce himself:

"In comes I
Beelzebub,
Over my shoulder I
carries a club,
In my hand a
dripping pan:
Don't you think I'm a
jolly old man?"

In 10 or 12 minutes the little dramas will be over, and the players will shamelessly dun spectators for money. Then they will sing a wassail song, invoking good health, and get down to some serious imbibing.

The mummers' plays are so ancient that nobody is certain of their origins. Some people believe they date only from the 18th century, others that they derive from the 11th-century Crusades, and others still that they hark right back to Aristophanes in the fifth century BC.

Unlike Morris dancing, which died out in Victorian times and was revived in the Twenties, the plays seem to have been performed without a break. Certainly, 100 years ago they were used by poor country lads as an excuse for knocking on rich men's doors and earning a little Christmas money.

Their symbolism is equally obscure. Their main point is to celebrate the death of the old year and the birth of the new – but the function of Beelzebub is now lost, as is that of other minor characters such as Bolt Slasher, a gallant soldier, and Old Speckleback, "the biggest man in North Humberland".

Many of the plays open with a brief address by Father Christmas:

"In comes I, old
Father Christmas;
Christmas or not, I hope
old Father Christmas will
never be forgot."

For audiences familiar with the text, half the fun lies in roaring out the best-known gags in concert with the actor. Thus when Father Christmas asks the Quack Doctor what he can cure, the answer is:

"The hitch, the stitch,
the palsy and the gout,
Pains within and pains
without."

It is a thousand pities that the Oxford don R J E Tiddy did not live to complete his study of the plays. He collected many of the texts during the early years of this century, but was called up into the army and killed in the trenches in August 1916. The notes he left, plus the texts, were published in 1923, but, had he lived, he would undoubtedly have done more work.

That the mummers' tradition is alive and well in Gloucestershire is mainly due to the enthusiasm of Donald Workman, a forester by profession, and a man of wide-ranging imagination. His main aim now is "to make people feel they belong to the landscape". To this end he has boldly adapted this year's play in order to put fire into a huge, soulless estate of 4,000 new houses which sprawls across the hills at Eastcombe, near Stroud.

Together with a friend, Steve Rowley (a keen Morris dancer), he has "taken on the challenge of waking these people up" and, with the help of 20 pupils at Thomas Keble School, has built a 30ft dragon of bent hazel-rods and canvas. At six this evening, with him carrying the head, one helper to work the jaws, and seven more supporting segments, the beast will progress in a cacophony of drums, shakers and tin whistles across the estate to the green, where the Bold Slasher and St George will have been fighting.

The object, says Mr Workman, is for the dragon to symbolise all the latent energy in local young people. The message to the old fogeys – on this, St Thomas's day, the shortest of the year – is "You may put us down. But we'll come back and back".

Rosemary, the red-nosed reindeer?

Malcolm Smith explodes some seasonal myths

Christmas may be commercialised, but it is surprising how some of its age-old associates remain as commonplace, and as fresh, as they ever have been. Yet, in reality, what a bunch of Christmas interlopers they are. Mistletoe, a hangover from pagan rituals, is in decline in the wild. Rudolph the reindeer is not Rudolph at all, but Rosemary (and she doesn't have a red nose). Robins are so aggressive they hardly deserve any place in a Christian festival. And the Norway spruce, that most popular of Christmas trees, is a virtual newcomer.

Reindeer: In 1823, when Professor Clement Clarke-Moore of New York State published his poem, "The Night Before Christmas" in *The Troy Sentinel*, he couldn't have chosen a more inappropriate animal to pull Santa's voluminous sleigh. The legend of Rudolph was born. Red-nosed from the cold air, he and his companions had to fly to keep their parcel deliveries on time.

But, as any Lapp worth his seal meat knows, reindeer can't be hurried. Adapted to a cold life, they overheat all too easily, panting and salivating after less than a kilometre at full gallop. In the mild British Christmas climate, a few streets at a fast trot would do them in.

Reindeer have special noses. Covered in hair, they stay warm and dry because their design ensures that the air they breathe is heated up, and the exhaled air cooled, conserving body heat and water vapour. However cold it becomes, they don't become even the slightest bit pink. Red, never.

If antlers are vital when the sleigh crosses that winter wonderland, Rudolph is out of a job. After the autumn mating season, male reindeer shed their antlers. But the females retain theirs. So, come Christmas Eve, your children's presents may be hauled by Ruth, Rosemary or Rachel – but not by Rudolph.

Mistletoe: Worshipped by the Druids, mistletoe has long been a part of the Christmas festivities. But for how much longer? It is a parasite with no roots of its own, and its fate now hangs on the future of old orchard apple trees.

In 1957, England had 26,000 hectares of dessert apple orchards. Now, barely 10,000 hectares remain. Not so in France. The French have retained many of their old orchards and their mistletoe flourishes. Napoleon gave it a helping hand by planting poplars along French roadsides, essentially to shade his soldiers from the midday sun. Perhaps it was also to supply the infantry with sprigs of mistletoe to give to their sweethearts at Christmas.

Robins: There are more than four million pairs of robins in this country, and the bird was ranked sixth in the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden Birdwatch survey this year.

Although they look chirpy on our Christmas cards, ironically robins are less likely to survive cold winters than many other birds because they depend so much on ground-living prey. But, because a pair frequently rears two or three broods each summer, numbers recover quickly. And robins are fiercely territorial, which does allow them to live at high densities, particularly in woods, where up to 66 pairs have been recorded in a square kilometre.

The much loved robin has been little molested over the centuries, with a couple of exceptions. In the mid-1800s they became an epicurean treat, and, in the 1890s, a millinery adornment: the wings – or even the whole bird – were used to decorate hats.

Fir: Thanks to Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert – who made the Christmas tree popular in Britain – around five million fir trees are sold here each year. Nearly three-quarters are Norway spruce, a tree that is not even native to these shores, though it is an abundant forest tree across northern Europe, from Scandinavia eastwards. Around one in 16 of the commercial trees planted in Britain are Norway spruce. But a plantation – where the trees are planted close together to spur their upward growth – is a pale reflection of a natural spruce forest. The trees of northern forests – an inspiration for composers such as Jean Sibelius – grow up to 180ft and are accompanied by pines, birches and aspen and a plethora of mosses, flowers and lichens. Our plantations of quick growers (a Norway can be cut for Christmas in seven years) are so dense that few other plants survive on the ground beneath.

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all consuming

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Present and correct

Louise Levene goes panic buying

It is Christmas Morning. You are on a remote stretch of road somewhere between Bodmin Moor and the Atlantic Ocean. The mobile phone rings. It is your mother. "You haven't forgotten that Tilly and the twins are still here have you? Do hurry. I've put the sprouts on." The ultimate Christmas nightmare begins: you have precisely 45 minutes to find three presents and all you have on you in the way of gifts are the his-and-hers prescription Ray-Bans you got for your parents, a set of monogrammed golf-club cosies and a large box of diabetic chocolates.

What the hell do you do? First, find a petrol station that's open. Deep breaths. Remind yourself that just because a present is practical and widely available doesn't mean that people won't be grateful for it. Even the grottiest petrol station should furnish some of the following:

Magazines: Buy one. Roll it up. Sling some tinsel round it (begged from garage owner's festive hangings if necessary). Hand this unpromising looking gift to bemused cousin as you explain that this is merely the first installment of their gift subscription. Mental note to self to arrange gift subscription as soon as you get home. Ideally it should be something they like (*Private Eye* , £17; *Fortean Times*, £30; *Fez*, £9) but mainstream is good too (*Hello*, £92; *Radio Times*, £52; *BBC Good Food*, £18.60). These should all be quite widely available but knowing your luck you could end up with *Caravan Life* (£27) or *Punch* (a staggering £76.50).

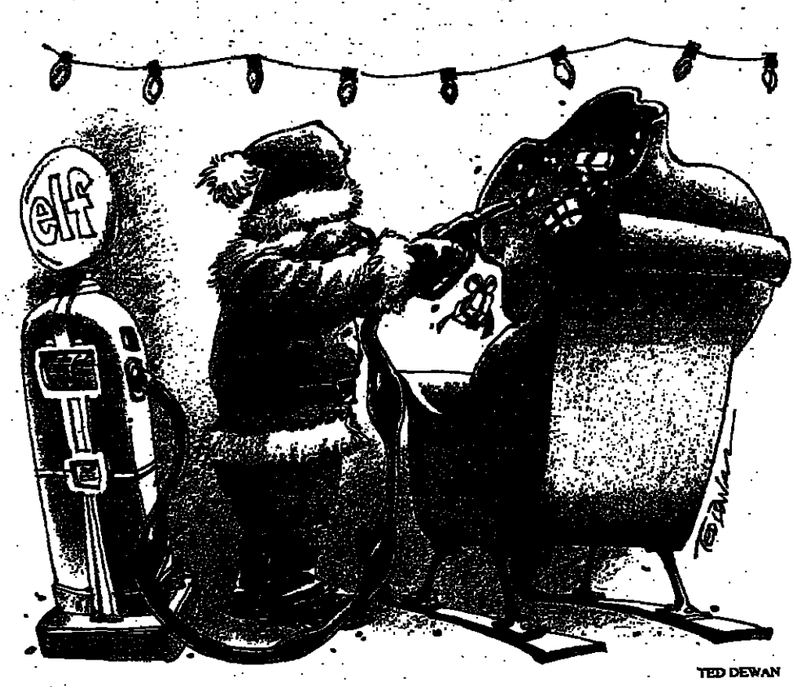
Entire cartons of sweets: Bully the attendant into having a shufti in the stockroom and dig out 40 tubes of Polo Mints (£9.12) or 36 packs of Times (£4.04). Good present for greedy small children with good brushing habits or for the sort of people who can't drive to the end of the road without sticking something in their mouths.

Fags: Be realistic. Your not buying cigarettes for a smoker doesn't mean they will smoke any less of the things. Make someone really happy with 200 Silk Cut (£31). Reformers among you might consider buying a milder variety than the recipient actually likes. Large cartons of Swan Vestas (£4.75) also please — young men usually rather enjoy the fact that they can strike a match on the arse of their jeans.

Get the man in the shop to either sell you a Christmas card or beg him to give you an envelope. Put a few quid in it. Seal envelope. Small children adore having money to spend and they always prefer hard cash to novelty mittens.

Stop at the nearest pub. Try to look unconcerned as festive rural conversation stops and dogs begin to howl. Approach the bar with confidence and attempt to sweet talk the totally strange landlord into selling you a nice big bottle of Bells with the label on upside down. An understanding chap at the Licensed Victuallers Association suggests that one should expect to add at least fifty per cent to the supermarket price. More persuasive types might get them to part with an ice bucket for around £10 or a card of peanut packets with a half-naked woman underneath (£8.64). A box of beer-mats – 50p if you're lucky. Landlords approached during extensive research for this article were very unforthcoming, one uncharitable soul actually demanding that a bottle of Bells should be sold by the gill, i.e. for £70. If you succeed in this Herculean mission you should consider a career as a time share salesman.

OK. That was nice. It may have been limited but it was at least shopping of a sort. Suppose it gets worse than that. Suppose civilisation has been left so far behind you cannot find a pub or a petrol station. Time to turn your gaze upon the interior of the car. Ask yourself: have I ever used the First Aid kit? If not, it might make a suitable gift for a young accident-prone cousin whose 2CV doesn't run to such luxuries. All right. Let's get serious. Has your aunt ever seen those earrings?



TED DEWAN

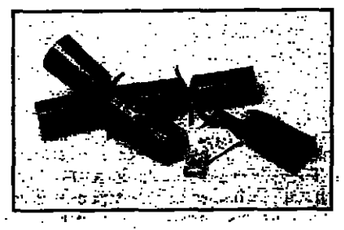
You might be able to slip them inside a Christmas cracker when you get there. Driving a Mercedes that still has a bombsite on the front of the bonnet? You might consider sacrificing this as a present for a tragically unfashionable teenager. OK we're getting desperate now. Check the glove compartment for cassettes. Travel rug? Newcastle United mascot? Nodding dog? You leave the car. Is there a holly bush in their garden? Potted bay trees on the path? Gnomes? Ding dong. If the worst comes to the worst you could always settle for the doormat.

Six of the best christmas crackers

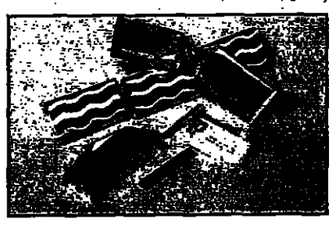
Christmas dinner wouldn't be the same without a good cracker to pull. Traditionally, Christmas crackers have been about a big bang, a dodgy joke and an impossible puzzle or game. Unfortunately, not much has changed: the jokes are still dodgy and the only alternative seems to be straight facts – do we really want to know about the speed of the universe? The hats haven't changed much either. The only difference lies in the gifts. Still, don't expect too much – you have to pay considerably more for the truly special ones – Liberty do crackers with small silver gifts at £69.95 for six. If you buy any small gift at Tiffany & Co they will wrap it in a cracker for free. Better still, stick to our cheap and chic selection for a cracking good Christmas.

PHOTOGRAPHER: TONY BUCKINGHAM. STYLIST: HOLLY DAVIES

1 Six black crackers with gold painted hearts and red raffia bows, £29.95, from **Liberty**, 214-220 Regent Street, London, W1 (0171-734 1234). The tested cracker contained a miniature bottle of prune cognac, a paper party hat and a joke: *What is the strongest bird* in the world? A crane! Cracker rating 5/6.



2 Six green and red luxury crackers with festive gold writing, £20, from **W H Smiths**, branches nationwide (01793-616161). The tested cracker contained a mini padlock, a paper hat, and a little fact: Who was the *designer of the original Mor*ris Minor? Alex Issigonis. Cracker rating 4/6



3 Six silver holographic crackers, £14.50, from **Paperchase**, 213 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1 (0171-580 8496) and branches nationwide. The tested cracker contained two pencils, a paper hat, and a joke: Why did the garden fence? Because it saw the window box! Cracker rating 4/6

4 Six black and white "minimalist" style crackers, £19.95, from **The Conran Shop**, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, London, SW3 (0171-589 7401). The tested cracker contained a gold pill box, a paper hat and a joke: What is the best diet for athletes? Runner beans and mussels! Cracker rating 6/6.

5 Six multi-coloured crackers with a gold centre band, *£15.95, from Heals, 196 Tot*tenham Court Road, W1P 9LD (0171-636 1666). The *tested cracker contained a* dice game, a paper hat and a joke: What do they sing at a snowman's birthday party? "Freeza Jolly Good Fellow"! Cracker rating 5/6.

6 Twelve traditional crackers with floral design, £10, from **Boots**, 127A Kensington High Street, W8 5SF, and branches nationwide (01159-950611). The tested cracker contained a novelty gift, a paper hat, and a joke: Where *do baby apes sleep?* In apricots! Cracker rating 4/6.

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PROFESSIONAL MALE, MID-20'S, good-looking, sporty, easygoing, likes clubbing/socialising, WLTM an attractive female with a GSOH for friendship and possible relationship. London based. Photo essential. Box No 1:1787.
AUTHOR/PUBLISHER (London-based, 50, divorced, s/s) writing definitive book on 'Romantic Weekends' seeks very attractive, well-spoken fem. companion W/ESDH, good writing skills, mature personal skills, free to travel weekends, 30-50. Photo+CV+Letter. Box No 1:1791.
GAY, 27 YR OLD, prof. male, GSOH, likes cinema, cycling, eating out, drinking. Seeks similar male for fun and possible relationship. London area. Box No 1:1744.
SLIM FIT MALE 32. Interests: Soap operas, running restaurants, current affairs. Wishes to meet a lady, age unimportant, for uncomplicated fun & pleasure. London Herts Bucks Birmingham. Box No 1:1818.
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Male, 41, 5'10", blue-eyed, slim (not thin), happy, big heart, vegy (no sandals), own business, seeks warm, spirited woman, 28-45. London/Home Counties. Box No 1:1820.
ARE THERE ANY OLDER ladies in South Wales, North Lancs, who long to be loved again? Successful 38 M, WLTM kind and caring female. All Replies answered. Photo please. Box No 1:1822

Attractive graduate, widow, seeks sensitive intelligent man (50-64) to share walks, theatre, music and reflective moments. Herts/London. Box No 1:1824.
48+ ON YR OWN M/F Notts Let's meet & do interesting things. Box No 1:1825.
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AUSTRALIAN ARCHITECT/IT.DESIGNER & explorer, has amazing offer of love, adventure & international travel for female: 25-45 yrs. (Also available as unique party guest). Box No 1:1828.
ATTRACTIVE, SLIM, VIVACIOUS WOMAN, looks good in wellies or heels. Interests: Classical/Jazz music, countryside & the arts. Seeks down-to-earth, n/s, 40's man with big heart and GSOH. Mids. Box No 1:1772.
PARTICULAR ATTRACTIVE one-man redhead seeks tall/broad, one-woman Celt of maturity, strength, affection & honesty. Box No 1:1830.
M, 40, BLONDE BLUE, 5t, solvent, handsome character, honest, 5'11", rough diamond, WLTM fey-inine, pretty, smart lady. Yorkshire/Anywhere. Box No 1:1800.
PERCEPTIVE & REFLECTIVE M, young 52, seeks slim, open-hearted, 40+ F, with capacity for love. SW London based. Photo appreciated. Box No 1:1801.
WARM INTELLIGENT UNCOMPLICATED woman, 37, WLTM attractive, sane, humorous man, to share the good things in life. Bristol area, but can travel. Box No 1:1799.
GOOD-LOOKING DUTCH LADY (52), living in Germany, seeks an intelligent, warm-hearted man, interested in languages, antiques, art,...etc. for correspondence and friendship. Box No 1:1792.
MAN, 58, LOVER OF old cities and lonely hills, the written word and painted canvas, seeks woman with similar interests for reciprocated support, and affection. N.London but will travel. Box No 1:1789.
MAN, YOUNG-LOOKING 41, Radio 4 addict, meditator, church-goer, well travelled with wide-ranging interests. WLTM lively-minded lady, under 38 years and living in South for friendship and hopefully long-term relationship. Box No 1:1785.
RUSSIAN LADY 26/5'7"/9,5ST needs your broad mind & shoulders. You need harmony. Box No 1:1795.
TALL ATTRACTIVE MALE age 33 likes dining out sport, seeks female 24+ Berks/W.Lond. Box No 1:1796.

FORTNIGHTLY FORTYISH LEAN LOVER wanted by woman who also enjoys cycling and solitude. Pennines and/or Peak district preferred. Box No 1:1785.
AUSTRALIAN IN OXFORD, urbane 6ft male, 44 yrs old, who loves to laugh seeks warm, lively, and cultured lady. Box No 1:1751.
SINGLE MAN, late 30's, living on Herts, seeks slim n/s woman for friendship/romance. Box No 1:1779.
SLIM, DARK, PETITE, attractive prof. female, 33, enjoys art, theatres, cinema and travelling. Seeks prof. male companion. Photo appreciated. Anywhere. Box No 1:1780.
ARTICULATE, LIVELY-MINDED Shrewsbury woman, 40's, seeks educated man of wit and imagination, n/s, to share life's civilized pleasures. Box No 1:1787.
FRIENDSHIP, POSSIBLE romance, attractive female, young 40, 5'6", slim blonde caring romantic adventurous. Seeks similar male, 35-45, for wining dining & cosy nights in. Photo please. Box No 1:1793.

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The present is getting rather dusty.....!!!

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Help is at hand at the end of the line

Spendthrift on the sofa. By Charlotte Packer

Last minute shopping doesn't have to be the manic and depressing experience most would have you believe. Although many mail order companies listed last Thursday as their final order date for Christmas deliveries, we have tracked down a few who are willing to take orders today, tomorrow and Monday, and will make sure the goods arrive in time for Christmas. With our guide all you need to do is make a pot of coffee (or better still crack open a bottle or wine), settle yourself by the telephone and have your credit card to hand. One word of warning: placing orders so close to Christmas means that postal delivery will be impossible so you will be paying for express or courier services; these charges will vary from company to company and depend on the distances involved.

Boden Catalogue and Mini Boden, 0181-453 1535 or fax 0181-453 1536. Last orders 3pm today.
Clothes always make good presents and Boden are offering up to 25 per cent off on selected items: beautiful French Collar wool cardigans in lime green, hot orange or charcoal are now £58 (down from £68), and luxurious heavy silk shirts (five different colours) which were £72, are now only £58. For men there are bright woven silk ties at £29 (down from £36), or cotton car coats with fleecy linings for £85.

The Mini Boden (from 0-12 years) catalogue contains plenty of items which would make great kids presents. Knotted stripy pull-on hats are particularly nice and great value at £6. If you want something more substantial try the corduroy jackets with padded tartan linings, £30-34. In the main the clothes are comfy and functional and most are machine washable. As with the adult range all occasions are catered for: party clothes through to cosy nighties and pyjamas.

If you are not sure about what to get the sales team will be able to advise you. And if you get it wrong, Boden are happy to arrange refunds.

Johnny Loves Rosie, 0171-435 0089; fax 0171-794 0534. Last orders by 5pm today
If you are looking for a teenager's stocking fillers then Johnny Loves Rosie, a company that specialises in accessories, is the place to start. The stock is mostly imported from America and is very strong on hair accessories. Wonderful hair slides encrusted with varnished Liquorice Allsorts (£10.95) are typical of the look they promote. The company is also big on fake flowers, offering huge roses in improbable colours attached to hair slides (£7.50-£16.95). Glitter also features heavily – sparkly Alice bands from £10-24. Their new catalogue includes nail-files printed with tropical fruit, lips, roses, chili peppers and sunflowers (£2.50) and last year they launched red and black patent leather shoulder bags for carrying bottled water (£12.95).

The General Trading Company, 0171-730 7220; fax 0171-823 4626
You could buy presents for the whole family here. Stock ranges from the trinket/gifty end of the market (ceramic pumpkin trinket pot, £6.95; silver plate beehive candle holder, £99; spice scented mug mats, £11.95 for four) through to jolly things for children (watch with Monopoly strap, £14; Emma Bridgewater initial mugs, £9.75; giraffe height chart, £28). Kitchen gadgets include useful things like saucepans or corkscrews as well as fun items like heavy-duty rubber gloves with gingham cuffs and decorated plastic strawberries.

Scent Direct, 01428 654575. Last orders 23rd December.
Perfume costs about the same as a bunch of flowers, smells as good and lasts much longer. The company has access to over 700 different perfumes and all arrive beautifully giftwrapped with a handwritten message. Scent Direct also operates a search service which is particularly useful should you want to buy someone a new perfume. Simply let the sales team know what your friend usually wears, and they will identify perfumes with the same top, middle and base notes.

Red Letter Days, 0181-343 8822. Last orders 12 noon, Tuesday 24th.
Red Letter Days is a company that boasts over 200 alternative gift "experiences", few of which are for the faint hearted. All the obvious things are here: a day's ballooning, from £145-£225; parascending, £25 for a ride, £75 for a half-day course; and of course Bungee jumping, £59. But there are lots of other really unusual and fun options too. What about buying your granny a Llama trek in west Sussex (£59) or your brother an hour-long Microlight flight (£99)? If you can't make up your mind you can always buy a voucher, from £39 to £1,250 which will allow the receiver to choose what they want to put themselves through.

Ocean catalogue, 0800-132985; fax 0171-498 8898. Last orders 12.30pm, 23rd December.
Ocean is a stylish home accessories catalogue and although it is targeted at adults, there are one or two items which would suit teenagers and children: brightly coloured or animal print storage boxes, £6.95-£10.95; kids pyjamas (from £17.95). For older friends and family the choice is much wider. At the top end of the scale there are plenty of things for people with extravagant tastes – Alessi kettle (£69.95), Acca Kappa Travel Kit (£69). At the other extreme there are lots of well-priced items, many of which look rather more expensive than they are, for those less demanding souls – set of six shot glasses (£13.95); silver plated memo pad (£9.95); silver-plated wine stoppers (£9.95).

Bates Gentlemen's Hatters, 0171-734 2722. Last orders Monday 23rd.
If you're having problems finding a present for a troublesome older male, a hat or cap of some description may well be the answer. Although Bates is one of the few places where you could buy a curly brim bowler or a top hat, their best sellers are flat caps and baker's boy caps. The assistants will be able to talk you through the different styles: deerstalkers, Fedoras, Homburgs, toppers, bowlers, boaters, and many more. Prices from around £38 to £120.

Panzers, 0171-722 1496/8162 or 0171-435 0165; fax 0171-586 0209. Last orders: 1pm 23rd December for nationwide delivery; 7pm 23rd for London.
Hampers are always well received, and the ones from Panzers are particularly imaginative. The Italian hamper (£100) is a glossy green hat box filled with Italian goodies including white truffle oil, figs in chocolate, *panforte*, palma ham. The London hamper (£60) includes smoked salmon, stilton, Merlot 1995, shortbread and other delicious things all squeezed into a traditional wicker basket. Although only £45, the Boxing Day hamper conforms best to my idea of what a hamper should be about: a labour saving though indulgent meal. It comes in a wicker basket and includes a bottle of sauvignon, smoked salmon, cocktail blinis, stilton and Ackermans chocolate truffles.

The Food Ferry, 0171-498 0827; fax 0171-498 8009. Last orders 10.30am, 23rd
This is London's mail order supermarket and the company rapidly comes into its own around this time of year. Imagine: you are holed up with the relatives, and more have been spotted on the horizon and you realise that you forgot to buy brussels sprouts/cranberry sauce/Bath Olivers/Tonic water. They won't get you out of a turkey crisis but if you find yourself playing unexpected host this Christmas, give them a call and they should be able to ease you out of a tight spot.

The following delivery companies will all be operating as normal on Monday and Tuesday, but call to check cut-off times for booking couriers. They all warn that Monday will be a very busy day.

Red Star: 0345 000000
TNT: 0181-961 9393
DHL international: 0345 100300

Ten for under a tenner

The mad scramble is on for last minute presents and stocking fillers.
This year the shops are awash with classy little treats for under a tenner such as glitzy bottle stoppers, a Pooh bear fun watch, lots of that nice smelly stuff to put in the bath and just for *Independent* readers the chance to buy a Penguin T-shirt – complete with appropriate book title – for a mere £9.99.

PHOTOGRAPH: NICK TAPSELL

1 Diabolix bottle opener, £9.95 Little devil bottle-openers with pointy ears and toothy grins. Available in a variety of colours. Ocean Catalogue, 0800 132985.

2 Mug, £5.99, and seasonal tea £2.99 Choose a bright chunky mug and a packet of winter tea or coffee to match. From Whittard of Chelsea, 184 Kings Rd, London SW3 and branches nationwide (0171-924 1888).

3 Scented candle, Gap, £8.50 With its chunky glass container and silver lid this candle looks far more expensive than it is. For nearest branch call 0800 427789.

4 Natural bath set, House of Fraser Stores, £8 Sisal sponge, loofah, nail brush, back brush all in a matching wooden pail. For your nearest store call 0171-963 2000.

5 Citrus Bloom, tinned bathroom kit, Habitat, £8.50 Delicious smelling tin of goodies: soft orange flannel, two vegetable soaps wrapped in silver paper and orange ribbon, and a bottle of bath oil. The citrus bloom fragrance is a blend of Lily, Gardenia Cyclamen and Rose with base notes of Amber, Balsam and Moss. For your nearest store call 0645 334433.

6 Silver bottle stopper, Debenhams, £10.00 Smarten up anything from a milk bottle to an old decanter that's lost its stopper. Available in a variety of shapes. Call 0171-408 4444.

7 Book cover T-shirts Give a title for under a tenner. Penguin have a library of titled T-shirts taken from their early classic orange and green design paperbacks. Usually £12.99, *Independent* readers can order them by mail at £9.99 including p&p. In one largish size, choose from *Hangover Square*, *The Idiot*, *Les Miserables*, *A Perfect Woman*, *Rogue Male*, *Farewell My Lovely*, *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, *The Thin Man* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. For those who like reading in bed, there's a nightshirt called *The Big Sleep*. Call 0181-899 4036 for Visa/Access credit card orders, mentioning this offer. Also available from The General Trading Co, 144 Sloane Street, London, SW1 (0171-730 0411).

8 Pooh Bear Watchum, Timex, £9.99 Digital watches are not the best way to learn to tell the time but this makes a fun first watch. The stuffed Pooh Bear character lies across the watch face: simply lift his front paws to reveal the time. For nearest stockists 0171-630 8180.

9 Aardman Animation Clay Kit, £9.99 (+£1.50 p&p) The team that brought you Wallace and Gromit have created eight new characters for children to copy including a monkey, dolphin, tiger and Catfish. The Clay Kit includes a four colour clay bar, a step by step creature-creating card, modelling tool and spare eyes and ribs. For nearest stockists and orders call 01225 466999.

10 Children's Gardening Kit, The Conran Shop, £8.95 Contains: wooden handled fork and trowel, three packets of seeds (pot marigold, coleus, and the mysterious "sensitive plant"), green twine, plastic ties, plant labels, a marker pen and red cotton gardening gloves. Call 0171-589 7401.

bazaar

good thing

Waterproof Mudskippers £29.99 plus postage and packing.

A Danish fishing invention provided the inspiration for this piece of children's armour – designed for kids with an appetite for mess. For extensive off-road exploration wellies just don't let you get right up to your elbows in filth and are easily sucked of in mid-wade by mud with an appetite for small feet. These brightly coloured salopettes are moulded directly on to tough rubber boots to provide full protective entertainment. They have reflective safety strips for evening missions and adjustable straps.

Mudskippers, The Edington Sporting Company, 8-10 White Hays North, West Wilts Trading Estate, Westbury, Wilts BA13 4JT (01373 825469)

mad thing

Address book, Out of Earth, £8.90

If you know lots of liars, cheats, thieves, riff-raff or phonies this is the address book for you. Alternatively if you only keep your friends numbers in your little black book that's OK too. In fact this address book is for everyone and anyone. Buy it as a last minute Christmas pressie for your Aunt Hilda and kiss goodbye to those surprise Sunday visits.

Out of the Earth, 83 Church Road, Barnes, London SW13 (0181-563 9991).

sure thing

TV's Kevin Whateley is the wearer of these cuff links which are part of a collection of silver giftware from Goldsmiths and Walker and Hall stores. For every purchase Goldsmiths will contribute ten per cent to The Prince's Trust.

Goldsmiths, 2 Elland Road, Braunstone, Leeds LE3, 1TT (0116-232 2000)

correction

In last Saturday's article on silver, comments about hallmarking by Ian Ferguson were wrongly attributed to Alistair McCallum. We apologise for the embarassment caused.

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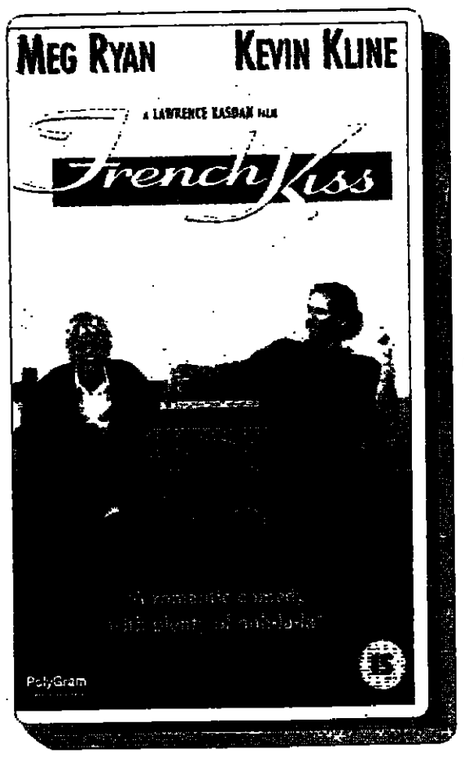
French Kiss



"A romantic comedy with plenty of ooh-la-la..." Sunday Mirror
"Plenty of hilarious moments" The Sun
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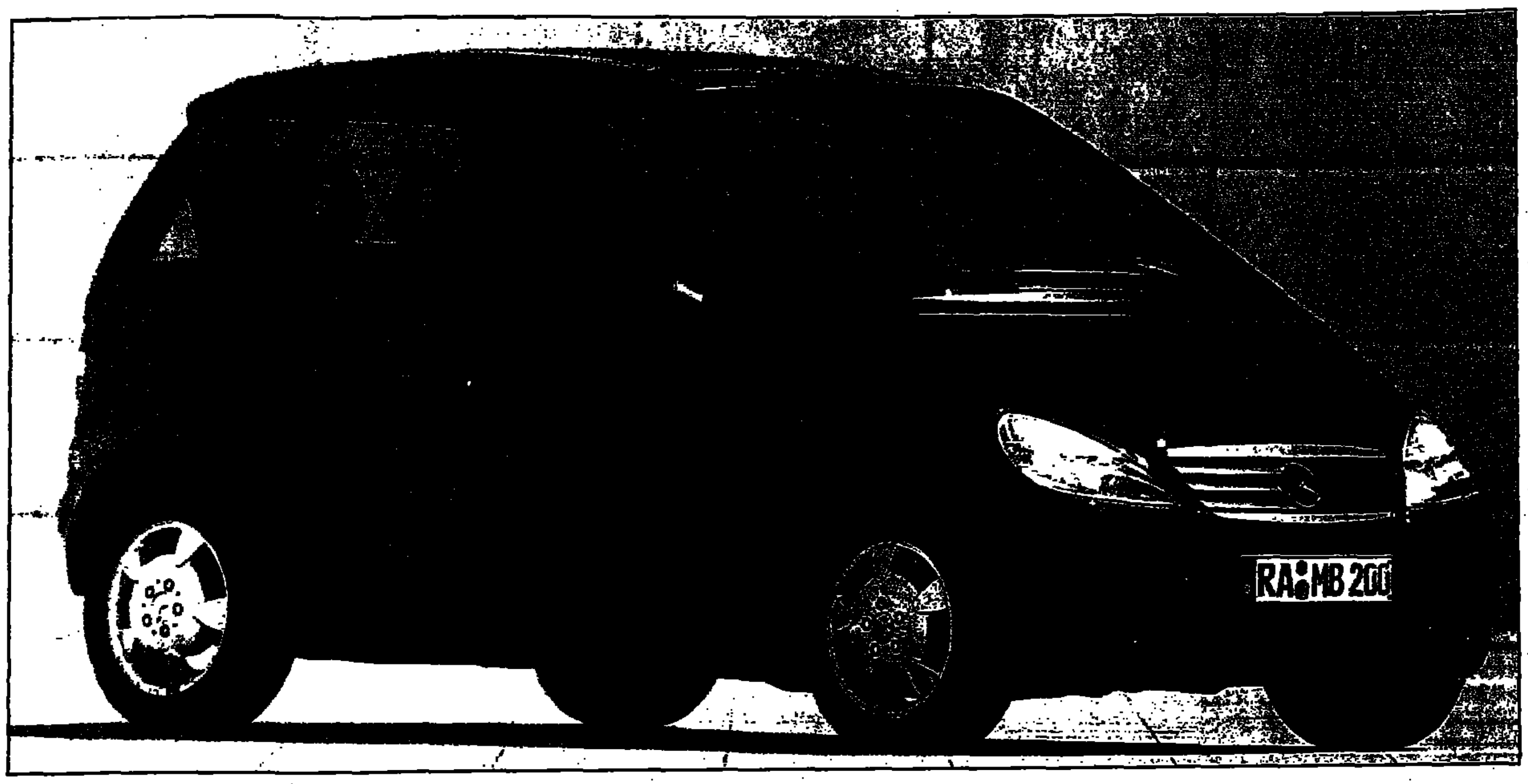
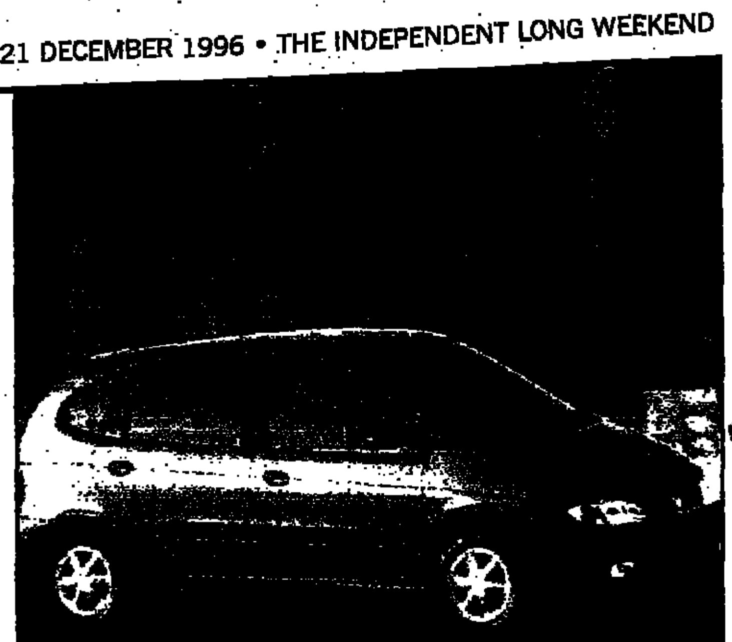
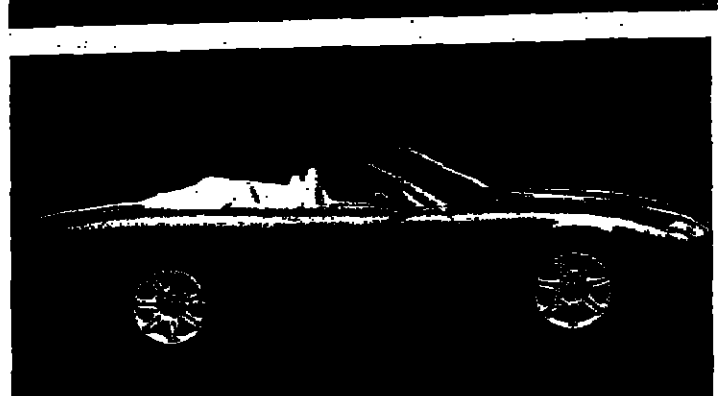
Gavin Green assesses the motoring year







Clockwise from far left: Mercedes-Benz A class, Renault Scenic, Jaguar XK8 and the Ford Ka

This year, some car makers finally proved that there is intelligence and social responsibility on the top floor and not just a manic desire to move metal and make money. Some clever solutions to long-standing problems were either previewed or put on sale. Among them was the probable answer to pollution caused by petrol or diesel vehicles.

The cleverest car to be shown in 1996 was the new Mercedes A-class. Shorter than a Fiesta but as roomy as a Mondeo, the A-class goes on sale in Europe next summer. Britain won't see it until early 1998. It's ingenious, not just because it extracts maximum cabin room from minimal exterior dimensions, but because it is also highly fuel-efficient. In diesel form, economy of over 70mpg is promised.

Also trendsetting was the Renault Scenic, now on sale in mainland Europe and due here next summer. Little brother to the Renault Espace, the Scenic is also a motoring Tardis: an Escort-sized vehicle that holds five adults in comfort rather than like tinned fish. The key is its Espace-style one-box design, which – as with the A-class – devotes length to people rather than to a wastefully large engine or a frequently empty boot. It deservedly won the European Car of the Year award.

The past year has also seen the rebirth of the small car as an icon, 37 years after the Mini showed the way. Ford's Ka, as with the Mini, is every bit as much fun to drive as a big sports car and every bit as eye-catching. Ford was probably the most improved car maker of 1996. After years of *voitures ordinaires*, it pumped out a great new Fiesta complete with the best little four-cylinder currently in production in Europe, a greatly improved Mondeo, and the Ka. OK, it still has the Maverick, but nobody's perfect.

Vauxhall, whose butt has been more firmly chairbound than most makers these past few years (spending its money instead on supermodels and Ruby Wax to promote its cars) showed signs of a technical fight-back by unveiling a new twin-cam 16-valve turbo-diesel engine in the otherwise ordinary Vectra. Its secret is its marvellous economy, a real teetotalling sipper in a market still too full of slurpers. It also gave the diesel a new lease of life, after various reports confirmed what many people had long thought: namely that diesel is dirty. Fortunately for the car lobby, those reports also confirmed what most of us already suspected: that the real diesel bad guys are old buses, trucks and taxis.

Rover, the nation's car maker, was shown up as a provincial, technically minimalist subdivision of new masters BMW in an intriguing BBC documentary (*When Rover Met BMW*) which was as good for the BBC's and BMW's reputations as it was bad for Rover. It was left to Jaguar to prove that there is still life left in the British car industry now that the "For Sale" signs have come down (after all, there's little left to sell). Jaguar's new XK8 was one of the most exceptional sports cars in a year peppered with desirable machines. In addition, there was the Mercedes SLK, which already has a worldwide waiting list of more than two years – and a new open-top Porsche, the Boxster.

Not to be outdone, Bentley, the sporting wing of Rolls-Royce, launched a new Continental T coupe. A big, bruising, £220,000, 400bhp monster, with a grille as tall as a grandfather clock, the Continental T is an anachronistic leftover from the days when most cars were gloriously over-the-top monuments to hand-craftsmanship and brute force. It is staggeringly fast and gloriously comfortable. I loved it, but it's about as significant for the future of motoring as a £5,000 Chanel evening dress is as a pointer for high street fashion.

Much more of a harbinger of what's to come is the hydrogen fuel cell, the big technical story of 1996. Both Mercedes and Toyota unveiled prototypes powered by them, Toyota's being the more advanced. The hydrogen fuel cell is, in effect, a new sort of battery that promises to solve the problems inherent with electric cars. The claim is for petrol engine-type performance and range, but no tailpipe pollution. It is about a dozen years from production but, if all goes to plan, it looks like doing to the petrol or diesel internal combustion engine what the jet engine did to the propeller.

Not that the petrol motor is quite dead yet, for – just like Steve Redgrave and the Olympics – there seems to be life in the old dog yet. Mitsubishi recently launched a massively improved petrol engine in Japan, boasting 30 per cent better economy, yet identical performance and improved emissions. The secret is its direct injection, in which petrol is injected direct into the engine's combustion chambers, rather than into a manifold first.

It mixes the fuel economy of a good diesel with the performance of a good petrol engine, and thus could well dump the diesel motor into the technical rubbish bin, as well as current technology petrol engines. Toyota is about to launch an engine boasting similar technology. European and American makers are bound to follow.

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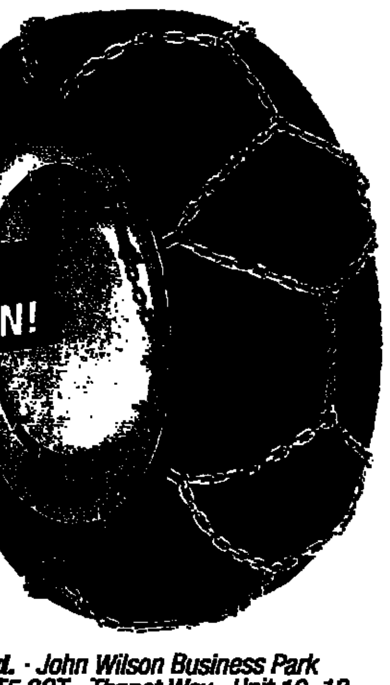

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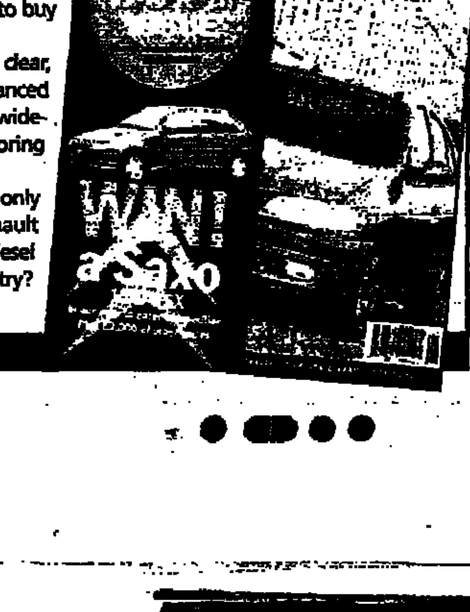
The 100th issue of **Diesel Car & 4x4**, in the shops now, is our biggest and best ever, yet still costs only £2.30. We test Vauxhall's new Vectra estate with its new high-tech diesel engine, as well as the Renault Megane turbodiesel and the revised Vauxhall Frontera. There's a free 8-page Celebration of Diesel supplement, a chance to win a new Citroën Saxo 1.5D worth £10,000, and lots more. Why not give it a try?

*aggregate emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter, in grammes per kilometre.



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Dream properties of 1996

This has been the year of London and the Home Counties. Anyone looking for a period house in the country near London can expect a muted response from an estate agent; ask about prices, and the conversation will become animated. Some prices have increased by 10 to 15 per cent; others by as much as 20 per cent. The trouble is, there has not been enough of what people want. Good quality and good location have always commanded a premium, but this year buyers soon realised that there would be competition for the best houses of their type.

Plenty of people have been sitting on cash, with nothing to sell. Their only course of action when finding the perfect house has been to offer as much as it is worth to them. As one buyer told an agent: "I will buy it out of the market." Prices for these houses – a waterside cottage in Hampshire, a mansion in Surrey, a flat in Belgravia – have surpassed even the estate agents' expectations. Here are a few that the agents themselves have found memorable.

Penny Jackson

The Laverstoke Estate, Whitchurch, Hampshire (above): around £10m in two lots. A classic estate with a Palladian mansion bang in the middle of it. The property has some 3,200 acres of prime farmland, fishing rights and lots of cottages. One of the two best estates to be sold this year (Savills)

The Old Rectory, Chiddingstone, Kent (above): went for more than £650,000. Used in the film 'A Room with a View'. It has 16th-century origins and is part of the National Trust village, with its Tudor cottages and ancient church. Hamptons arranged 103 viewings

Mole Hall, Wherwell, Hampshire (left): sold for more than £350,000. It was love at first sight for the new owners of this 15th-century cottage on the banks of the River Test. A dream cottage in a picturesque village, it went for more than the asking price (John D Wood)

The Walled Garden, Sherfield on Loddon, near Basingstoke, Hampshire (left): a unique use of a Victorian walled kitchen garden that sold for about £280,000. Vine houses, palm houses, potting sheds and a single-storey bothy cottage add up to a most unusual home (John D Wood)

1 & 2 Grosvenor Studios, London SW1 (above): "I can't believe I paid £1m for a two-bedroom cottage," says the new owner. A farmhouse feel, within steps of Sloane Square. Savills' agents say it's one of the most charming homes they've ever seen in central London

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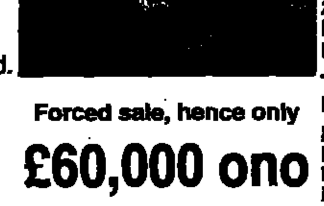

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	Fund size £M	Over 1 Yr Value £100	*Number of funds
UK Growth & Income	180.4	107.7	197
UK Growth	118.1	109.5	126
UK Equity Income	159.2	107.1	81
UK Equity & Bond	104.9	107.6	13
UK Equity & Bond Income	65.1	104.2	24
Gilt & Fixed Interest	41.8	101.4	66
International Fixed Interest	55.2	93.2	32
Investment Trust Units	56.8	102.4	10
Financial & Property Shares	56.8	109.3	8
International Growth	79.5	100.3	137
North America	50.0	105.6	111
Europe	83.1	108.7	116
Japan	64.1	78.5	84
Far East (excluding Japan)	46.9	91.9	38
Commodity & Energy	44.1	97.8	11
International Equity Income	37.3	101.3	8
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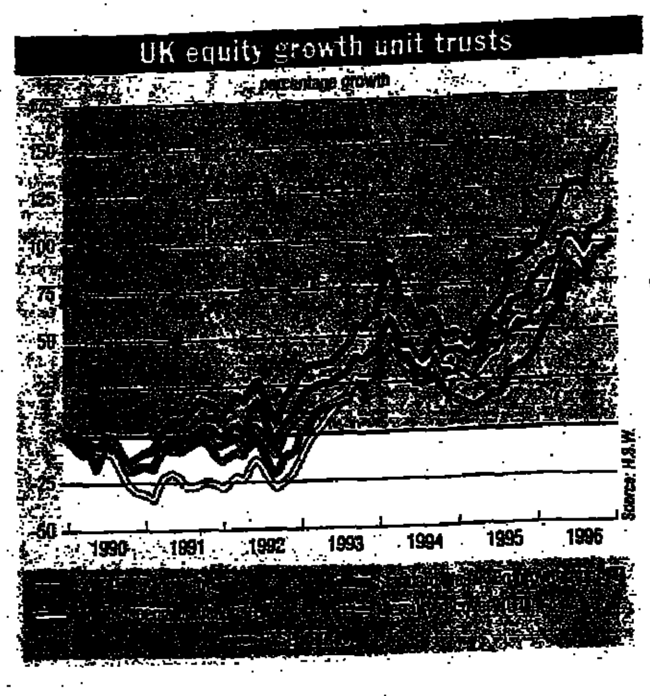
Top three performing funds of each sector are highlighted in bold at the top of each sector. The two end columns showing the value of £100 and rank over one year are based on offer to bid prices with income reinvested. All funds are more than one year old. Fund sizes taken on the first day of the previous month. The Independent publishes other unit trust information Tuesday to Friday.
Source: FT Information/HSW

*Excludes funds that are less than one year old



Equity funds race ahead

Nic Cicutti on a popular sector

As the world's financial markets betray the first *hints of nervousness after* two years of almost uninterrupted growth, the problem of *how to continue making gains* suddenly assumes greater importance. With almost £20bn in funds, the UK equity growth sector is by far the most popular for hundreds of thousands of investors.

Average returns for this sector have been respectable in the past 12 months. HSW, the statistics provider, calculates *the average growth in the* value of the 149 funds around since 1 December 1995 was 9 per cent. In the past two years, returns have averaged 30.9 per cent.

The figures show some remarkable variations, including the measly 1.6 per cent advance achieved by Eagle Star's Environmental Oppor*tunities* fund and the 0.4 per cent loss nursed by Exeter's Capital Growth unit trust.

But other funds have raced ahead, Baring's UK Growth trust achieving 17.4 per cent in the past 12 months, Lincoln National's 22.3 per cent and Johnson Fry Slater Growth showing 46.2 per cent growth.

For investors, the most *important aspect of any deci*sion on where to place their money is not just a record over one or two years but a fund's long-term performance.

The unit trusts in the graph above have all achieved that longer-term performance, remaining consistently in the top 25 per of funds in the sector almost every year in the *past seven. Some have done so* even longer. But while the returns are all good, the management style can differ.

Richard Royds, managing director of Mercury Asset Management's unit trust operation, says his company's Recovery fund, which shows returns of 104 per cent in five years, is based on its managers' *willingness to change tack if* they believe the markets are changing. "We changed our *manager some months ago* when Paul Harwood, head of our specialist unit, took it over," *Mr Royds* says. "The performance up to then had been very good but this gave us the opportunity to look again at where the fund was going."

Until Mr Harwood took over, the Recovery fund portfolio had been heavy on small to mid-market firms quoted on the *London Stock Exchange*. Since then, *given* market volatility, he has placed greater emphasis on FTSE 100 shares.

Fidelity's Special Situations Fund is another to have delivered consistent returns, with growth of 148.7 per cent placing it in fourth position over five years and first, with 293.9 per cent, over 10 years.

A *Fidelity* spokeswoman says: "The fund manager is Anthony Bolton. The way he selects his stocks is that almost any share may at some time represent a special situation. Generally, valuations will be attractive in relation to net assets or earnings potential, with additional factors involved which may have a positive *influence on share price.*"

For example, the fund will look out for companies in recovery situations, new technology, or bids. Investors should beware that the fund's bias towards smaller and medium-sized companies can *lead to short-term volatility* relative to the benchmark.

Jim Campbell, who manages one of the smallest funds in the sector with barely £2.5m, the Commercial Union PPT UK Growth Fund, has also remained in the top 30 over the past five years, delivering overall returns of 97.8 per cent. He says: "Because it is a smaller *fund, it is possible to be much* more aggressive. The risk is greater but so is the reward."

The Commercial Union fund will hold shares in about 50 companies, less than is usual. But Mr Campbell says: "I can concentrate on stocks I like. But the volatility of the market means more bottom-up stock selection."

Jeff Sanders, fund manager at Standard Life, also believes in careful stock selection for *his UK Equity Growth fund*, which has delivered returns of 148.5 per cent in the past seven years.

loose change

Bristol & West Building Society is reissuing its five-year Balanced Guaranteed Equity Bond on 2 January, which pays interest equal to the percentage increase in the FTSE 100 *share index* over that period. It is also offering a five-year Guaranteed *Equity Bond*, which pays 125 per cent of any increase in the FTSE 100 over the period. Minimum investment is £500. Details from society branches.

Cheltenham & Gloucester, which recently scrapped its pledge to be at least 0.25 per cent cheaper than its big mortgage-lending competitors, is increasing its variable rate to 6.94 per cent, starting on 23 December for new borrowers and 1 January for existing borrowers.

Barclays is offering a new edition of its Guaranteed PEP, based on a unit trust that tracks *the FTSE 100* share index. The trust offers full capital growth plus dividend *yield*. Barclays guarantees that if the investment is held for the full five years, if *the value of the investment* is lower than the sum invested, the bank will make up *the shortfall. Minimum* investment is £1,000. Details from branches or call 0800 400100.

Bradford & Bingley is launching a new two-year fixed-rate mortgage, pegged at 5.74 per cent over that period without having to take out building and contents cover with the society.

Leeds & Holbeck Building Society is raising rates for savers in its investment *accounts by an average of* 0.26 per cent. The increase means its Capital 30, a 30-day notice account, pays 4.4 per cent gross annually on savings between £10,000 and £24,999, rising to 6 per cent for sums above £150,000. Details on 0113 2257777.

The RAC will offer a "non-use discount" to many of its members if they do not use its roadside assistance service, giving discounts ranging between 13 and 22 per cent depending on the level of RAC membership.

Caught short in old age

Falling gilts have pushed down pensions, reports Andrew Verity

The event didn't make the front pages of many newspapers, but for tens of thousands of people, the effect was shattering. They discovered the income many hoped to receive for the rest of their lives suddenly dropped in value by up to 4 per cent almost overnight.

Those hit are among the most vulnerable sections in society – working people who are about to retire. Normally, they would expect to cash in their pension fund in order to buy an annuity, an income for life. In September, a fund of £100,000 might buy an annuity paying a level life-time income of £11,382 for a man aged 65. The same fund today buys just £10,920.

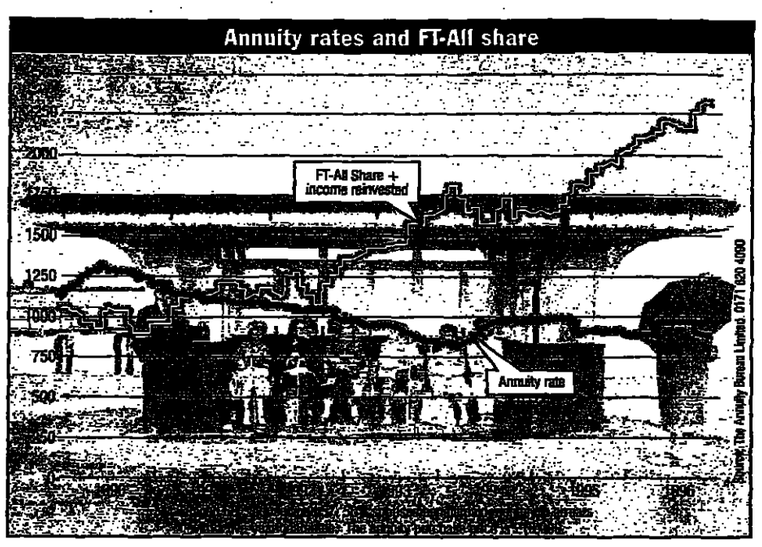
For 8 million people with a personal pension or in "money-purchase" schemes, which rely on annuities too, the income they may be locked into for the rest of their lives will vary alarmingly. More frightening is the way the value of pensions has fallen in the past five or six years.

Annuities are mainly linked to the value of long-dated gilts. Considered a safe investment, these are Government bonds issued as a means of raising money. They can rise and fall, according to whether interest rates are high or low. Low interest rates have therefore affected annuity rates.

Figures from specialist adviser Annuity Direct show that in 1990, when rates were high, a fund of £100,000 might provide an annual income of £15,785. Now, it is under £11,000. In other words, the falling gilt market has in the past six years pushed down pension incomes by more than 30 per cent.

Worse, the incomes available from annuities are likely to drop even further. Annuities also depend on mortality. The longer people live, the more it costs to provide a lifetime income.

This month, new figures are expected to show that people are now living 15 per cent longer than in the past, to the age of 82 for a man, on average, and 86 for women. Roughly, this means you need 15 per cent more fund to get the same life-time income. To get even £10,900, a 65-year-old will need not £100,000, but closer to £115,000.



In his 1995 Finance Act, the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, tried to provide a solution, allowing people to get some income from their pension fund before they buy an annuity.

While investors waited for annuity rates to improve, they could draw an income worth anything between 35 and 100 per cent of what an annuity would give. By age 75, they would have to buy an annuity. The reform has spawned a huge £1bn market in the new facility, known as "income drawdown". Has it worked?

Steve Bee, pensions manager at Prudential, the insurer, says: "The reform has not benefited those who suffered most because of low annuity rates. And those who have benefited never needed it in the first place."

There are three crucial reasons. The first is charges. To pay the person who sold the income drawdown facility will cost up to 5.6 per cent of your fund, or £5,600 on a £100,000 fund. That compares to 1 per cent in commission, or £1,000, if you buy an annuity.

If the investments in your fund grow enough, they may make up for the charges. But the growth also has to cover any money you take out, otherwise you will get less in future years.

The upshot is that drawdown is only for the relatively well-off who do not need the maximum income. Most providers insist that you have a fund of more than £100,000 unless you have income from elsewhere.

Those who need an escape from poor annuity rates can take advantage of some opportunities on offer. Most annuities are bought with pre-fixed incomes. More than 70 per cent of annuitants buy incomes fixed at a level rate. For a fund of £100,000, this might provide an annual income of £10,000.

Incomes can also escalate either by a fixed rate (3 or 5 per cent) or in line with inflation. But the price is an initial income up to 30 per cent less, or £7,000 for the same fund.

Two options offer the chance to benefit from gains in the equity market. These are with-profits annuities and unit-linked annuities.

With-profits annuities link the income you get directly to the performance of the with-profits fund. It will vary according to the bonuses announced by the fund, which in turn depend on fund performance. Therefore, a fall in the market may trigger lower incomes. While incomes from with-profits annuities will only go up if bonuses do, unit-linked annuities benefit in full from rises in the equity market. But the pay-back is that unit-linked annuities offer no protection against stock market falls.

The simplest way of boosting the income from an annuity is to shop around. The overwhelming majority of policyholders buy annuities from the company that holds their fund. If they took took money elsewhere, their income could be vastly improved. Annuity Bureau figures show that, as of 4 December, a 60-year-old man with a fund of £75,000 could buy an income of £7,969 a year from Britannic Assurance. With Scottish Amicable, the annuity would be just £6,700.

Annuity Bureau's managing director, Peter Quinton, said: "People who are purchasing an annuity must shop around. Not to do so would be the same as pouring money down the drain."

Money grows on Christmas trees

Tony Lyons on children's funds

Christmas is a time for giving. As well as presents, many parents, grandparents and relatives will decide to give money to a child.

Many building societies offer special children's accounts. There are, however, more exciting ways of putting money aside.

National Savings has a Children's Bonus Bond, series H, available for savings of between £25 and £1,000. It pays 6.75 per cent tax-free over the five-year term. If encashed early, interest is paid at 5 per cent a year.

For investments between £1,000 and £50,000, there is the Abbey National five-year Children's Savings Bond, paying a guaranteed 7 per cent fixed on sums under £2,500. Early withdrawals face heavy penalties.

For something more adventurous, but without guaranteed returns, there are two equity-linked products.

Invesco, the fund manager, has the Rupert children's fund. The minimum lump sum investment is £50, with regular premiums beginning at £20 a month.

The fund invests in blue-chip stocks in the FTSE 100 index. Since 1988, the fund has risen in value by just over 110 per cent, compared to less than 30 per cent in building society investment.

The Rupert fund sends cards to children on their birthdays. If more than £400 is invested, children receive a Rupert Bear toy, or a Rupert glove puppet if there is more than £800 in the account.

Alternatively, there is a 10-year Baby Bond from Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society, available as a tax-free life assurance endowment in the child's name. Maximum investment is £25 a month. A single premium can be paid which the society converts into an annuity: a £2,200 lump sum investment will provide enough to pay the maximum monthly premium.

Managed by PDFM, the investment house, the Baby Bond has established itself as a good performer. Over 10 years and assuming premiums of £25 a month, its value would be £5,713 today, an annual growth rate of 12.4 per cent net after charges.

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Danger zone: Buying Christmas presents and taking advantage of sales is not such a cheerful experience for people who are unable to get credit Photograph: Nick Tapsell

'Tis the season to be almost bankrupt

Neil Baker reports on ways to restore a good credit rating

Spare a thought this festive season for less fortunate people who will not be able to enjoy the traditional activities of credit-fuelled generosity, binge spending and conspicuous consumption – the people with bad credit ratings.

Doing a "proper" Christmas is now such an expensive business that for many people the most important ingredient is not goodwill, smiling children or snow – it's plastic.

A bad credit rating can be a real sickener, but the start of a new year is a good time to sort out any debts and get the slate wiped clean.

When you make any application for credit, the lender will usually do a score check. Information on the application form, such as how much money you earn or how long you have been in your job, is used to work out how easy it will be for you to repay the money. You could pass this test with flying colours, but most lenders will also ask a credit reference agency to check your application.

Even if your financial position makes you a good credit risk, reference agencies hold information going back several years. If you have had a bad experience with credit in the past, the lender may decide not to make any credit available.

Credit reference agencies must let you see your file if you ask. Some of the information is culled from public sources. But reference agencies also hold information which many people would regard as confidential.

Whenever you take out a loan or other credit, the agreement you sign will state that the lender has the right to inform a reference agency if you default on the agreement.

Default does not just mean that you didn't pay off the money owed. One of the big two UK agencies, CCN, can know whether you have had an unauthorised overdraft or whether any cheques or direct debits have bounced. It will know whether you have been late with any loan repayments and, if so, how late and how often.

CCN keeps information about country court judgements (CCJs) and bankruptcy on your file for six years. Information on loans or accounts is held for six years if they are active and three years if they are closed.

It is possible to have your slate wiped clean. "Credit repair" agencies offer to have CCJs removed from your credit file for a fee. But beware – last year the Consumer Association reported concerns that some of them acted illegally.

More than 1 million CCJs are registered each year for non-payment of debts and, according to the Consumers Association, there are three genuine reasons for having a CCJ set aside: it was registered in error; your defence, which should have been heard at the time, was not considered; or the amount was paid in full within a month. If you feel that any of those applies in your case, you should contact the court which gave the judgement. Default notices on your credit file can be removed if you apply to the lender which put the notice there – they can tell the credit reference agency to remove the information. They might be prepared to do this if payments have been brought up to date, if you have come to an arrangement to pay, or if you are in dispute over the credit agreement.

For a copy of a "No Credit?" leaflet call the OFT on 0181-957 5058. If you have problems with debts, there is an OFT leaflet called "Debt". The National Debtline phone number is 0121-359 8501 and the Consumer Counselling Service is on 0345 697301.

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Losses on the cards

My biggest mistake

Businessman Santa Claus

"About two years ago, I'd just split up with my wife and had a cheque for about £1,500 to come, covering part of the proceeds from selling the house. On the day the cheque came, I had a poker game organised.

We were playing seven-card stud. Each player is dealt two cards face down and one face up, then there's a round of betting. Remaining cards are dealt face up. Quite often we would bet blind on the first round.

I remember I was showing a queen, and the guy opposite me a king. He bet £5 blind and raised me another £5. It all got a bit mad until we've got £50 in the post without even looking at our cards.

Anyway. I've looked at my hidden cards and I've got two more queens. So I've got three queens straight away. He looked at his cards and then at me. Everyone else had seen sense and dropped out.

The next two cards came down – two sixes for me and two nines for him. I had a full house of three queens and two sixes and there's only a couple of dozen hands in the game that can beat that. So I'm pounding in the money and he's raising me and I'm thinking: 'This is a dream, I've got him!' Eventually, I put the last of my money in and he said: 'Well?'

I'd got a full house and he did too. So I said: 'You've got three nines, haven't you?' And he said: 'No, I've got three kings.'

After about 24 hours of poker, I sat down with shaking hands and wrote out a cheque to the guy and thought: 'Shit – what did I do that for?'

I was 23, I was earning about £15,000 and I'd never lost more than £400-£500 before.

When something like that happens, everything seems detached. You're wandering round, you can't read, you can't think, you can't eat.

The lesson it taught me was that if you're going to gamble, set aside a separate bankroll and don't use the money you need for other things.

How much I set aside to play with depends on how my luck's been. I might take £300 with me and if I lose it, I lose it. On the other hand, I might not bet anywhere near that amount.

I started playing poker about four years ago. I like to think my skills have improved since I lost the £1,500 but I'd far rather have lost that money than never had the experience."

Santa Claus changed his name by deed poll from Ashley Cotter Cairns to promote his business providing Father Christmases for children's parties. He was talking to Paul Slade.

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Fixed rates						
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	0.95 for 1 year	85	0.75%	—	1st 5 yrs:6.03% of sum repaid
Northern Rock	0800 591500	4.89 to 1/1/99	95	£295	—	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Lambeth BS	0800 225221	7.45 to 1/1/02	70	£295	—	1st 5 yrs: 6mths interest
Variable rates						
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	0.75% for 1 year	90	—	—	1st 5 yrs: 6.23% of sum repaid
Hinckley & Rugby	0800 774499	3.74% for 2 years	70	£250	Free valuation	1st 5 yrs: dis recl'd, 3mths int
West Bromwich BS	0121 525 7070	5.10% for 3 years	75	—	1% adv rebated	1st 6 yrs: 6% of advance
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Bristol & West	0800 608088	1.95 to 1/10/97	90	275	—	To 30/9/01: 6-8 mths interest
Universal BS	0191 232 0973	6.45 to 1/2/00	90	£295	—	1st 6 yrs: 5% of advance
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	7.49 to 1/1/02	95	£295	—	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
First time buyers variable rates						
Staffordshire BS	01902 317317	1.96 to 1/12/97	90	—	—	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Greenwich BS	0181 8588212	3.49% for 2 years	95	£250	—	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed
Mercantile BS	0191 2959500	5.99% to 1/8/01	90	—	Refund valn fee	1st 6 yrs: discount reclaimed

	Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)	
Unsecured				**With insurance**	**Without insurance**
Northern Rock BS	0345 421421	12.9H		£112.66	£102.59
Royal B of Scotland	0800 121125	14.0		£114.78	£101.45
Nationwide BS	via local branch	14.9		£113.15	£102.49
Secured (second charge)				**Max LTV Advance**	**Term**
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	7.8	Neg	£3K - £15K	6 mths to 25 years
Royal B of Scotland	0131 523 7023	9.0	70%	£2.5K-£100K	3 years to retirement
Midland Bank	0800 494999	9.6	90%	£5K-neg	5 years to 30 years

	Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm	Authorised APR	Unauthorised % pm	APR
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.84	10.5	2.18	29.5
Alliance & Leicester	0500 959595	Alliance	0.76	9.5	2.20	29.8
Bank of Scotland	0800 805805	Direct Cheque	—	11.0	—	26.5

	Telephone	Card Type	Min Income	Rate % pm	APR %	Annual Fee	Int. free period
Standard							
Co-operative Bank	0800 109000	Advantage Visa	—	0.64N	7.90N	nil	0 days
Capital One Bank	0800 669000	Visa	—	0.797N	9.90N	nil	54 days
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	Mastercard/Visa	—	0.9167	11.50	nil	0 days
Gold cards							
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.50	10.50	£120	46 days
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	£20,000	0.94N	11.90N	nil	56 days
Royal B of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05N	14.50N	£35	46 days

	Telephone	Payment by direct debit % pm	Payment by direct debit APR	Payment by other methods % pm	Payment by other methods APR
John Lewis	via store	1.39	18.0	1.39	18.0
Marks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.87	24.8	1.97	26.3
Sears	via store	1.94	25.9	2.20	29.8

APR Annualised percentage rate. B+C Buildings and Contents insurance LTV Loan to value ASU Accident, sickness and unemployment
E Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years. H- Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged
N Introductory rate for a limited period.

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Best savings rates

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
Portman BS	01202 292444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	4.50	Year
Co-Operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	4.75	Month
Direct Line	0181 667 1121	Instant Savings	Instant	£10,000	5.50	Year
Direct Line	0181 667 1121	Instant Savings	Instant	£50,000	5.75	Year
Teachers' BS	01202 887171	Bullion	Postal	£500	4.80	1/2 Year
Scarborough BS	0800 590578	Instant by Post	Postal	£5,000	5.70	Year
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Acess Postal	Postal	£10,000	6.00	Year
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Acess Postal	Postal	£25,000	6.05	Year
Cheltenham & Glouc	0800 717505	Direct 30	30 day P	£100	5.50	Year
First National BS	01232 314050	High Yield	30 day	£25,000	6.45	Year
Leopold Joseph & Sons	0171 288 2323	40 Day Notice	40 day	£10,000	6.22	Year
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0113 225 7777	Postal Bonus	30/4/98P	£10,000	7.00	Maturity
Kleinwort Benson	0800 317477	HICA	Instant	£2,500	5.20	Month
Halifax BS	01422 335333	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000	4.25	Quarter
Chelsea BS	0800 717515	Classic Postal	Instant	£10,000	4.35	Year
Schroders	0171 382 3301	Special	Instant	£10,000	5.15	Month/Year
Portman BS	0800 663663	Fixed Interest Bond	1 Year	£500	6.60F	Maturity
Bristol & West BS	0800 202121	Year Plus Fixed Rate	1/5/98	£5,000	7.00F	Maturity
Woolwich BS	0800 222200	Fixed Rate Bond	2 Year	£1,000	6.75F	Year
Coventry BS	0345 665522	Fixed Rate Bond	30/11/99	£1,000	7.30F	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£8,575	7.50F	Year
NatWest Bank	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45F	Year
Birmingham Midshires	0645 720721	Inflation Beater	5 years	£1,000	7.00	Year
West Bromwich BS	0990 143668		5 years	£250	7.00	Year
Sun Banking Corporation	01438 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.50F	Year
NatWest Bank	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45F	Year
National Counties BS	01372 747771		5 years	£9,000	7.20	Year
West Bromwich BS	0990 143668		5 years	£250	7.00	Year
Financial Assurance	0181 3803388		1 year	£5,000	5.30FN	Year
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 207 9007		2 year	£3,000	5.90FN	Year
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 207 9007		3 years	£3,000	5.95FN	Year
Financial Assurance	0181 3803388		4 years	£5,000	6.20FN	Year
Financial Assurance	0181 3803388		5 years	£50,000	6.40FN	Year
N'castle Bank Gibraltar	00 350 76168	Nova Access	Instant	£25,000	6.30	Year
Northern Rock, Guern	01481 714600	Offshore 30	30 day	£10,000	6.55	Year
Birmingham Mids Guern	01481 700680	Offsore Fixed	31/1/98	£5,000	6.85F	Maturity
Northern Rock, Guern	01481 714600	Millennium Bond	1/1/00	£10,000	7.50F	Year
Investment Accounts			1 month	£20	4.75	Year
				£500	5.25	Year
				£25,000	5.50	Year
Income Bonds			3 months	£2,000	6.00	Month
				£25,000	6.25	Month
Capital Bond		Series J	5 years	£100	6.65F	Maturity
First Option Bonds			12 months	£1,000	6.00F	Year
				£20,000	6.25F	Year
Pensioner's G'teed Income Bond		Series 3	5 year	£500	7.00F	Month
NS Certificates (tax-free)		43rd issue	5 year	£100	5.35F	Maturity
		9th Index linked	5 year	£100	2.50+rpi	Maturity
Children's Bond		Issue H	5 year	£25	6.75F	Maturity

P post only *F fixed rate*
N net rate *A All withdrawals subject at 30 day loss of interest*
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TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON, AND WHEN, TOMORROW READ TODAY'S EYE

Cruel Train

Zola's *La Bête Humaine* stylishly updated to the Brighton of the Blitz. All aboard with David Suchet, Saskia Reeves and Adrian Dunbar – BBC2

High Society

Who wants to be a millionaire? Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra do. Fine vintage late Cole Porter and all that MGM gloss – BBC1

Millennium

The new one from *X Files* creator Chris Carter – and it stars Lance Henrikson as an ex-FBI agent who has exact visions of murders. Useful – Sky 1

The EYE

Your complete Christmas guide to television and radio over the next 14 days, plus our critics choose the season's top 60 films.

Serena Mackesy
In my week

I love to watch the middle classes give standing ovations to something that, were it happening in a garage near them, they would be on to the council about

The foyer of the Bloomsbury Theatre is scattered with bodies. Slumped against walls, squatting on steps, drinking coffee, they look like the middle scene in a disaster movie: that moment when everyone starts to discuss rebuilding the city, unaware that the dam in the mountains above is about to give way. I half-expect Steve McQueen to pick his way through the crowd asking if anyone's seen his wife.

He doesn't. Instead a lady with a clipboard appears, calls "anyone else with an 11 o'clock?" and ushers another twentysomething into the auditorium. Everyone is trying to look unintimidated, like cool people do. You've got to be pretty cool to get into Stomp.

I have a bit of a thing for Stomp. They're noisy and funny, and there's a wonderful elegance about constructing an entire show around banging brooms, dustbins, hammer handles, oildrums, navvies' boots and Zippo lighters. I also love to watch the middle classes give standing ovations to something that, were it happening in a garage near them, they would be on to the council about. Stomp are touring Europe next year, and 12 of the 250-odd people who have come in today will be packing their jimjams and joining them.

The hopefuls file onstage and form a horseshoe. In the stalls, Luke and Steve hunch in time-honoured "thank you, next" positions. Luke wears a Donny Osmond hat and chain-smokes Silk Cut, and Steve, suffering from some lurgy, is bundled up in about five coats, looking miserable. Fraser, Fiona, Theseus and Paul, old hands at this game and blessed with drummers' arms and dancers' bodies, are there to put the auditioners through their paces. Fraser and Paul have fags hanging from their mouths half the time as well, with that practised carelessness of the really fit.

Luke comes forward, leans his elbows on the apron. "I'm Luke," he says, like nobody knows, "and I'm one of the directors." He gives a speech: an eight-month tour, six weeks' rehearsal, very physically demanding, if you've got back or knee problems, forget it. By this time, people have stripped off their outer gear and you can tell pros from amateurs: the "real" dancers wear those tit-hugging cropped halter-neck tops people wear in *Staying Alive* and cast slightly contemptuous "I've got training, you know" looks at those around them. Luke continues. "There's no real criteria for Stomp," he says. "So if you're a dancer or a drummer you won't necessarily fit."

Sheep and goats separate quickly. Fiona and the lads pull a series of steps at great speed, making it look like a stroll in the park. The air fills with clomping noises as people try it for themselves. Half the dancers wear that grim frown I remember from dreary winter afternoons trotting round a school hall while a woman in a bouffant wig shouted "one-two-three-one-two-three!". The others do the same, then break into cheesy grins as they get it.

Fraser, Fiona and Paul demonstrate an eight-bar routine stringing together three sets of steps and a lot of clattering with poles and hammer handles. Paul gets off-time. Luke yells: "Sack that man! You're a disgrace!" Paul boots with laughter. "Sorry. Can I come back with the next group?" "No! Go away!" The three of them do it again, and this time it's faultless: the last bang of staves on boards is like a car backfiring.

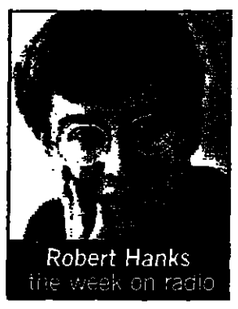
Twenty-three people try it. Actually, they're not bad. I'm glad I'm in the stalls with my feet up on a seat. Steve's mobile goes off and he begins a lengthy conversation. I guess if you've been doing it long enough even the sound of hobnails on wood can become background noise.

At the end, everyone has to do a solo. Ripples of horror run through the ranks. "It's just four bars," says Fraser. "Fuck it. Don't be embarrassed. Just do whatever." One woman flees the stage with her hand over her mouth. "Where was she standing?" says Luke. "Next to – what's your name?" "Jordy," calls her former neighbour. "What did you say to her, Jordy?" "I told her she smelt."

The rest of them, once it's too late to back out, do their damndest. Again, the people with training are easy to spot. Some try tap routines, which sound hackneyed in comparison with the crazy energy of the real Stompers; others do Young Generation-style jumps, their arms waving in faux-balletic looseness. And then there are the others: the ones who think up something funny to do, or chuck themselves into frightening breakdance. Every time someone does the splits – and one guy goes down so hard on the floor you think he'll split all the way up – Luke does a little groan of sympathy. Another does a body slam that shakes the auditorium, and the whole room whoops. As each person finishes, they run and hide behind the line, recovering from the shock of exposure.

Then it's over. One lot down, another 10 to go. Theseus, Paul, Fraser and Fiona are going to be knackered. As they wait for the next batch to file through, everyone jokes around, discusses lunch. They joke in awed tones about the body slammer. "I couldn't watch. I thought we were going to be scraping him up off the floor." He got a recall.

The world according to Dilbert



Robert Hanks
the week on radio

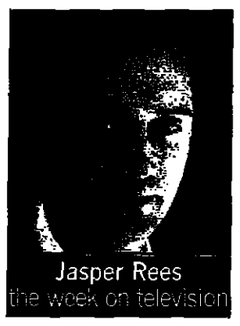
The most interesting fact I learnt from my radio this week is that there's a business guru called Dr Mike Hammer – he was being quoted on **In Business** (Radio 4, Sun). I've never been a big Mickey Spillane fan but, as far as I can remember, the main things about Mike Hammer were that he used to shoot people quite a lot (one of his adventures was called *My Pistol Is Quick*) and enjoyed a ready supply of large-breasted, loose-living blondes. This sounds to me like the basis of a sound management technique, and I will certainly buy the handbook if I see it.

As it happened, Peter Day was actually interested in the management philosophy expounded by another fictional character – Dilbert, who appears in a daily cartoon strip written and drawn by Scott Adams. Dilbert is a downtrodden functionary in a faceless, high-tech corporation – his kingdom is a tiny work cubicle, his subjects Mr Computer, Mr Stapler and the Binder family; outside this realm, he is the serf of managers who are much more stupid than he is. Business gurus – including Dr Mike Hammer – are now lining up to proclaim Dilbert a source of profound thought on management techniques, and Adams is cashing in on this with a book, *The Dilbert Principle*, which the *Wall Street Journal* has called "the best management book ever published"; hence an entire edition of *In Business* devoted to Dilbert.

Day tried to place Dilbert in the tradition of "Parkinson's Law" ("Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion") and "The Peter Principle" (in a hierarchy, an employee will be promoted until they get to a job they are no good at; then they will stick there) – profound truths expressed through humour. Actually, Parkinson's Law has always struck me as a flip, cynical generalisation, too broad to be really useful (on the other hand, "The Peter Principle" is an intuitive, brilliant formulation of an obvious truth). "The Dilbert Principle" isn't even that. Adams had some smart remarks to offer on the "illusion of content" you can create with jargon, and the time-wasting idiocy of mission statements (Day agreed heartily enough to suggest that he must have come across this sort of idiocy himself – you wonder if he had any particular major publicly owned broadcast service in mind). These didn't add up to a philosophy, though, so much as a loose collection of vaguely cynical attitudes towards middle management and management gurus. The best summary of Adams's thinking seemed to be his observation, "It's a 10 per cent world" – that is, 90 per cent of everything is rubbish, and we scrape by on the 10 per cent that works.

If anything, Dilbert fits into the tradition of The Gospel According to Snoopy and The Tao of Pooh (and The Te of Piglet) – attempts to extract profound truths from what's basically appealing fluff. In complete contrast, **The Greatest Story Ever Told** (Radio 4, Mon), the National Theatre of Brent's brilliantly funny retelling of the Gospels, was superficially inane – Desmond Olivier Dingle (Patrick Barlow), constantly failing to live up to his hugely inflated ambitions; the bovine Wallace (Jim Broadbent) unwittingly sabotaging all his attempts to sound impressive – but contained surprising depths. Some of Desmond's metaphysical flights (God the Father briefing the Holy Spirit before he sends it off to earth) were oddly thoughtful glosses on the Bible; while Wallace's simple-minded gentleness brought an unpredictably touching quality to the scenes in which he played Mary. Stupidity has its uses.

All that – and personality too?



Jasper Rees
the week on television

Sports Review of the Year (BBC1, Sun) is a night of a thousand climaxes, condensing 12 months of cathartic endgames into two hours' traffic on your screen. As usual, it ended bathetically, even fraudulently, as the personality award fetched up once more in the hands of someone with no actual personality. Sport at the supreme level calls for such extraordinary reserves of dedication that having a personality is a needless complication, a handicap, like an extra weight strapped on the back of a jockey. It's as if the task of streamlining the body into a machine has been pursued to its logical limit: an athlete with nought per cent body fat will most likely have nought per cent charisma.

No such problem over in the field of academe. A fascinating **Horizon** (BBC2, Mon) introduced us to geology's Cheech and Chong, a couple of roly-poly scientists who reckon they've found the cause and location of what may have been the biblical Flood. Conscious that it would constitute at least part of the extraordinary narrative's allure, Richard Curson Smith's film was careful to buy into the cliché of the scientist as cuddly space cadet, the genius who can calculate the meaning of life but can't do up his own flies.

Like any good batting partnership or rowing pair, these two had evolved contrasting styles of cerebral attack. The one with the walrus moustache and baggy shorts, clearly together enough to have diligently honed his wacko image, took on the job of remaining on nodding terms with the intellectual straight and narrow, while behind his colleague's placid grin and bland gaze whirred the brain of a fly-away lateral thinker. No gimmicky upper-lip deep-pile carpeting for this guy: he's so complicated that if he tried growing a moustache he'd probably forget not to shave.

Their hypothesis was that the Black Sea was once a freshwater lake, which must have been suddenly flooded by the Mediterranean spilling through the Hellespont with the force of a hundred Niagaras. As they edged towards the conclusive proof of this extraordinary theory, the story grew very thrilling and the storytellers very thrilled. Bless them, for they have scintillated.

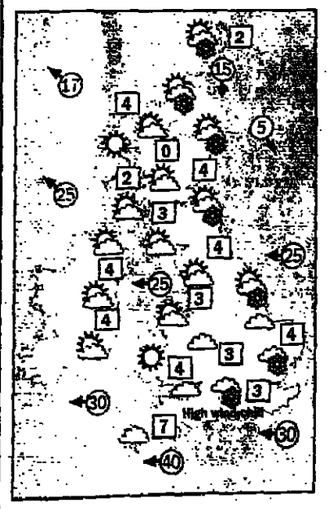
Down at the other end of the Med, a bunch of French Egyptologists (what's the collective noun for Egyptologists? A motherhood?) were also scouring the seabed for clues. Near the breakwater outside Alexandria lie the ruins of **The Seventh Wonder of the World** (BBC2, Tues), the ancient lighthouse that crumbled into the sea several centuries ago. The motherhood were granted permission to map the site and haul up the most priceless pieces. Like *Horizon*, the programme had a proper understanding of the story's appeal, the delicious incongruity of a team of paunchy academics deciphering hieroglyphics through goggles. There's only so much excitement you can generate on television about a scatter of underwater stones. Rather than the excavated, it was the excavators, highly specialist sleuths zipped into wet suits and crash-trained in scuba-diving, who were the star turn. In one beautifully framed shot, they marched along the breakwater in single file like militaristic ants on a mission to lug mountains.

The camera loves some academics, and some academics love the camera. In **Nightmare: the Birth of Horror** (BBC1, Tues, Wed) Professor Christopher Frayling went in for some shameless flirtation, but the lens was reluctant to succumb to his charm offensive. While competently telling of the genesis of Frankenstein and Dracula, he worked his socks off to enter the spirit of it all. He clambered up schlosses, snowshoed across glaciers, crept lugubriously around graveyards and generally camped it up in a tweed three-piece and look-at-me Rupert Bear scarf.

All the while, he was busy holding together the shreds of his professorial credibility. One minute, he's demonstrating a vampire's fang technique, the next he's trying to make dogged literary research sound sexy. A difficult stunt to pull off, this, requiring him to come halfway down from the mountain of academe. Shelley was distastefully referred to as Mary Godwin's "boyfriend", Byron as the "superstar poet", but you could catch fleeting glimpses of his reverence for books. "Two volumes," he added pointlessly to a description of a tome Bram Stoker read while researching Dracula. Highbrow plus lowbrow equals hybrid: call him Dr Fraylingstein, half-professor, half-presenter. Spurred on by the impulse both to educate and to titillate, he'll probably feel most at home in the next episode, when he tackles Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

WEATHER

The British Isles



General Situation and 5-Day Outlook:

A large depression will be slow moving near north-west Spain. A ridge of high pressure will extend from the Norwegian Sea to eastern Europe.

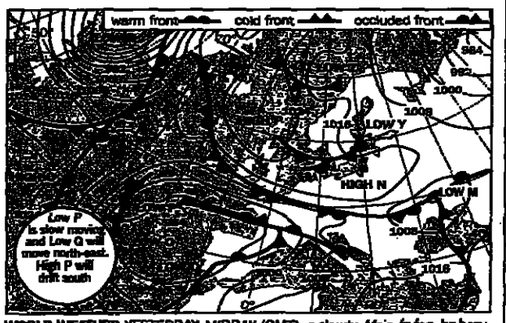
Today, most of Scotland will be dry with sunshine, patchy cloud and light winds, but it is going to be cold. Also, a few snow showers are expected on the east coast and over the Northern Isles. Northern Ireland and Northern England will get some sunshine, but with a scattering of wintry showers and a cold easterly wind. The rest of England and Wales will be mostly cloudy with a biting easterly wind and patchy light rain, sleet or snow.

Sunday and Monday will see cold easterly winds across the whole of the country, and they are going to be strong to the south. Plenty of fine weather is expected, but with a scattering of wintry showers while sleet or snow is likely in the south. The cold weather will then continue through Christmas with the winds likely to turn more northeasterly. That would bring snow showers to the east, but the sleet or snow to the south should move away, while the west gets some sunshine.

Aberdeen	c	4	39	Cardiff	c	5	41	Ipswich	dr	4	39
Anglesey	s	6	43	Carlisle	sl	2	36	Isles of Scilly	c	11	52
Ayr	c	4	39	Dover	m	6	43	Jersey	c	10	50
Belfast	c	5	41	Dublin	c	6	43	Liverpool	c	4	39
Birmingham	dr	5	41	Edinburgh	sh	4	39	Lizard	dr	9	48
Blackpool	c	3	37	Exeter	c	6	43	London	dr	6	43
Bournemouth	dr	8	46	Glasgow	c	5	41	Manchester	c	4	39
Brighton	r	9	48	Guernsey	c	10	50	Newcastle	c	3	37
Bristol	dr	6	43	Inverness	c	3	37	Nottingham	c	3	37

Oxford	m	7	45	Florence	r	13	55	*New York	r	5	41
Plymouth	c	8	46	Frankfurt	c	1	34	Nice	c	12	54
Ronaldsway	c	5	41	Geneva	r	7	45	Nicosia	s	19	66
Scarborough	c	4	39	Gibraltar	hz	16	61	Paris	c	10	50
Southampton	r	8	46	Helsinki	c	-9	16	Prague	sn	-3	27
Southend	c	6	43	Hong Kong	s	20	68	Reykjavik	c	3	37
Stornoway	f	4	39	Istanbul	s	20	68	*Rio de Jan	s	32	90
Tiree	f	5	41	Jerusalem	s	20	68	Riyadh	c	24	75
York	dr	4	39	Jo'burg	f	21	70	Rome	f	17	63
				K. Lumpur	hz	29	84	Singapore	hz	32	90
				Lisbon	r	14	57	Stockholm	s-10	14	
				*Los Angeles	f	16	61	Sydney	s	20	68
				Madrid	c	10	50	Tenerife	s	24	75
				Majorca	c	17	63	Tokyo	s	10	50
				Malta	s	20	68	Venice	f	-5	23
				Melbourne	s	17	63	Vienna	fg	1	34
				*Miami	f	21	70	Warsaw	c	-5	23
				Moscow	sn	-9	16	*Washington	c	4	39
				Munich	r	4	39	Wellington	c	19	66

Europe and The World



WORLD WEATHER YESTERDAY, MIDDAY (GMT): c,cloudy; f,fair; fg,fog; hz,hazy; m,mist; r,rain; sn,snow; s,sunny; th,thunder *previous day's figure at local time.

Amsterdam	c	0	32	Florence	r	13	55	*New York	r	5	41
Athens	s	17	63	Frankfurt	c	1	34	Nice	c	12	54
Auckland	c	20	68	Geneva	r	7	45	Nicosia	s	19	66
Bangkok	s	32	90	Gibraltar	hz	16	61	Paris	c	10	50
Barcelona	f	15	59	Helsinki	c	-9	16	Prague	sn	-3	27
Beirut	c	15	59	Hong Kong	s	20	68	Reykjavik	c	3	37
Belgrade	f	15	59	Istanbul	s	20	68	*Rio de Jan	s	32	90
Berlin	c	-2	28	Jerusalem	s	20	68	Riyadh	c	24	75
Bombay	f	31	88	Jo'burg	f	21	70	Rome	f	17	63
Brussels	m	2	36	K. Lumpur	hz	29	84	Singapore	hz	32	90
Budapest	r	3	37	Lisbon	r	14	57	Stockholm	s	-10	14
*B'nos Aires	f	27	81	*Los Angeles	f	16	61	Sydney	s	20	68
Cairo	s	21	70	Madrid	c	10	50	Tenerife	s	24	75
Cape Town	s	27	81	Majorca	c	17	63	Tokyo	s	10	50
Casablanca	f	19	66	Malta	s	20	68	Venice	f	-5	23
Christchurch	c	15	59	Melbourne	s	17	63	Vienna	fg	1	34
Copenhagen	s	-5	23	*Miami	f	21	70	Warsaw	c	-5	23
Corfu	f	10	50	Moscow	sn	-9	16	*Washington	c	4	39
Darwin	c	31	88	Munich	r	4	39	Wellington	c	19	66

AA Roadwatch

M1 West Yorkshire. J47 Leeds (M621/A653 Holbeck), long-term roadworks and lane closures with speed limits down to 30mph. Expect delays on M1, M621 and Dewsbury Road.

A6 Greater Manchester. Between Hazel Grove and Stockport, roadworks cleared at Dialstone Lane. Restrictions return on January 6th at a different junction.

M8 City of Edinburgh. J2 Newbridge Spur (M9), major roadworks. Down to 2 lanes on the roundabout. Delays likely on all approaches.

M23 Surrey. Between J8 Redhill (M25 Merstham Junction) and Junction 9 Gatwick Airport Spur (M23 Spur), lane closed overnight from 8pm to 6pm.

Out and about with AA Roadwatch call **0336 401** for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 39p per min (cheap rate) 49p per min (all other times) inc VAT.

Air Quality

Yesterday's Readings

	NO_2	SO_2
London	Moderate	Good
S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for Today

London	Moderate	Good
S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good

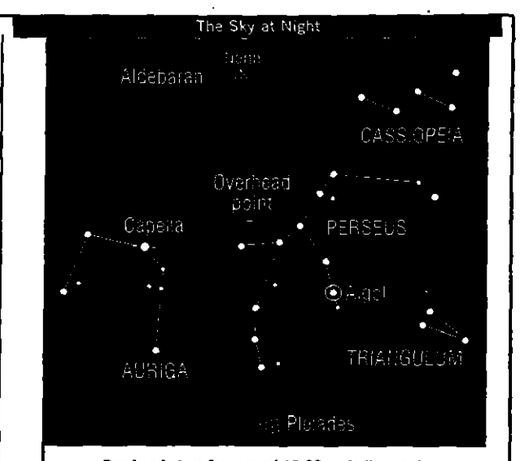
Lighting-up Times

London	3:54pm	to	8:04am
Bristol	4:04pm	to	8:14am
Birmingham	3:56pm	to	8:17am
Manchester	3:52pm	to	8:23am
Newcastle	3:40pm	to	8:30am
Glasgow	3:45pm	to	8:46am
Belfast	4:00pm	to	8:45am
Tomorrow			
London	3:54pm	to	8:05am
Bristol	4:04pm	to	8:14am
Birmingham	3:56pm	to	8:17am
Manchester	3:52pm	to	8:24am
Newcastle	3:40pm	to	8:30am
Glasgow	3:45pm	to	8:47am
Belfast	4:06pm	to	8:45am

High Tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	10.44	6.6	23.18	6.9
Liverpool	8.24	8.3	20.47	8.6
Avonmouth	4.01	11.3	16.31	11.7
Hull (Albert Dock)	2.52	6.8	15.36	6.8
Greenock	9.46	3.2	22.16	3.3
Dun Laoghaire	8.00	3.8	20.14	3.8

The Sky at Night



Overhead stars for around 10.00pm in the week *beginning 21 December*

The constellation Perseus, to be found just about overhead in the late evening at present, harbours one of the most famous of all variable stars – Algol. The Arabic origin of its name, Al Chul, means "the demon", or "the ghoul" – hence its English nickname, "the demon star". In old star maps it is often shown as the eye of the monstrous Gorgon, Medusa, whose head Perseus is holding.

Algol winks because it is in reality two stars waltzing around each other. On a regular cycle of two days 20 hours and 53 minutes, Algol's brightness plunges as the dimmer of the two stars crosses in front of its brighter companion. Normally the second brightest star in Perseus, Algol drops nearly a magnitude and a half. Minimum light lasts 20 minutes. Deline and recovery each take four hours. Two observable minima of Algol occur this week: on 23 December at 9.42 pm and on the 26 at 6.30 pm (Times are the middle of minimum light.)

Jacqueline Mitton

Sun and Moon

Full Moon: December 24

Sun rises 8:04am — Moon rises 2:03pm

Sun sets 3:54pm — Moon sets 4:11am

In The Independent next week

Hopkins: Will he survive Picasso?

Oasis: Holding on to glory?

The big picture

In Bed with Madonna
Sun 11.30pm BBC2

Ignoring *On the Town* (there are better Arthur Freed musicals on over Christmas), there's a chance to see Madonna *(above)* doing what she does best – and that's not singing to the masses of Buenos Aires. *In Bed...* is her film diary of the 1990 Blonde Ambition Tour. The rigorously choreographed concert routines are blinding, while the backstage stuff is by turns wry (witness her put down of Kevin Costner) and eye-boggling. Never forget, though, who's in charge here.

Television preview

Recommended viewing this weekend
by Gerard Gilbert

Gogs Sat 8.50pm BBC2
Musicals, Great Musicals Sat 9pm BBC2
American Visions Sun 7.30pm BBC2
Travels with My Camera Sun 8pm C4
Arena: Tony Bennett's New York *Sun 8.30pm BBC2*
Cruel Train Sun 9.50pm BBC2

Ahead honcho at MGM in Hollywood once asked the studio's producer of musicals, Arthur Freed, whether he would audition his daughter singing at the piano. Freed agreed – and was later asked by the bigwig what he thought of the girl's singing. "Very nice," he replied, "but I hired the piano player."

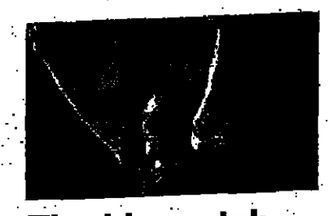
The piano player turned out to be Roger Edens, and another cog in the impressive machine that Freed built up at MGM during the Forties and Fifties – a team that included Busby Berkeley, Vincente Minnelli, Stanley Donen and a repertory company led by Judy Garland, Gene Kelly and Mickey Rooney. This was the great period of American musicals (Freed produced *The Wizard of Oz, Meet Me in St Louis, Singin' in the Rain* and *An American in Paris* – all of which are showing on TV over Christmas and New Year) and **Musicals, Great Musicals** (Sat BBC2) is a handsome and definitive guide to it.

Freed imported most of his talent from Broadway, which the charming Italian-American crooner, Tony Bennett, made his home during the 1950s. **Arena: Tony Bennett's New York** (BBC2 Sun) finds Bennett alive and well and even being adopted by the MTV-generation as "The King of Cool". Actually, Bennett's intimate, microphone-hugging style is anything but "cool". It's restrained and stylised, but passionate. And the man – painting, singing and still politically engaged – is certainly not "cool" in the narcissistic, fashion-magazine meaning of the word.

Ian Hislop's satirical comedy, *Gobble*, which was due to go out tonight, has become a victim of the E. coli bacteria. It was deemed an insensitive time to run a storyline about a "mad turkey disease" food scare. All is not lost on the drama front, however, because we still have **Cruel Train** (Sun BBC2), Malcolm McKay's very fine adaptation of Emile Zola's *La Bête Humaine* – updating the classic thriller to the Brighton of the Blitz. It starts with a murder, as railway clerk David Suchet and his wife (Saskia Reeves) stab Reeves's rich and abusive godfather to death on the London-to-Brighton train. Things deepen and twist when Reeves starts an affair with the only witness to the deed (an engine driver played by Adrian Dunbar) and Suchet takes up gambling with the dead man's five-pound notes. Reeves is terrific – sexy, treacherous and vulnerable, all in one roll of her richly suggestive eyes.

The two Cardiff-based creators of **Gogs** (Sat BBC2), Deiniol Morris and Michael Mort, were apparently invited to "talks" by Steven Spielberg after he saw this new five-part animated series about a prehistoric family. (We have yet to hear what happened next). It's being touted as a Britain's answer to *The Simpsons*, but I should forget all about that. The animation is clever, but the humour is crude and the characters are hindered by only being able to grunt instead of talk. The new *101 Dalmatians* has similar problems with its doggie characters, by all accounts.

American Visions (Sun BBC2) finds the USA emerging from the Second World War as a superpower, and its art fragmenting into the Beat and Pop movements, producing the likes of Warhol, Pollock and Rothko. **Travels with My Camera** (Sun C4) has DJ John Peel cruising the autobahns of Germany and meeting some of the people who have tuned into his broadcasts for British Forces radio over the years – civilian Germans to the man and woman.



The big match

Aston Villa v Wimbledon
Sun 3pm Sky Sports 1

Vinny Jones *(above)* will be in a penitent mood after being fined for his piece of jovial leg-pulling in last Saturday's *Sun* – so Aston Villa's frontmen had better be at their most evasive. The Crazy Gang are the shock troops of this year's Premiership, and they are currently sitting in there at third. Villa, meanwhile, should have their own bad boy back on duty – as their goalie, Mark Bosnich (he of the Nazi-style salute), returns from an ankle injury.

Saturday television and radio

BBC 1

7.05 The Pink Panther *(1090889).*
7.25 News and Weather *(5601841).* *
7.30 Children's BBC: The Dwarf Tree. 7.40 Speed Racer. 8.05 Alvin and the Chipmunks. 8.30 The New Adventures of Superman.
9.15 Live and Kicking. Zoë Ball and Jamie Theakston introduce Thatcherite popsters Spice Girls, Esther Rantzen and *Heartbreak High*'s Sebastian Goldspink *(S) (34955995).*
12.12 Weather *(7224763).*
12.15 Grandstand. 12.20 Football Focus. 1.00 News. 1.05 Racing from Ascot: the 1.10 The MITTE Group Kennel Gate Novices' Hurdle Race. 1.20 Swimming: action from the British Short-Course Championships at Pond's Forge in Sheffield. 1.40 Racing: the 1.45 The Long Walk Hurdle Race. 1.55 Swimming: continued coverage from Pond's Forge. 2.10 Racing: the 2.20 The Betterware Cup (Handicap Steeplechase). 2.35 Skiing: highlights from the Men's Downhill from Val Gardena in Italy. 2.50 Showjumping: coverage of the Volvo World Cup qualifier at Olympia. 3.50 Football Half-times. 4.00 Swimming. 4.40 Final Score *(45700686).*
5.20 News and Weather *(6810131).* *
5.30 Regional News and Sport *(556421).*
5.35 The Simpsons Christmas Special. Homer decides to earn extra cash by becoming a department store Father Christmas *(S) (849082).* *
6.00 Jim Davidson's Generation Game *(S) (70792).* *
7.00 Noel's... and the Winner Is. Noel Edmonds presents prizes to "ordinary people" who have done bizarre or comical things over the year. Eddie Izzard, Susan George, Bobby Davro, Frank Carson, Carol Vorderman and Louise have all been persuaded to take part *(S) (472131).*
7.50 The National Lottery Live. No Mercy perform their new single *(S) (163315).* *
8.05 Casualty. The Holby Christmas party (theme: James Bond) and Jude has to break her news to Matt *(S) (640266).* *
9.00 Goodnight Sweetheart. In the absence of Ian Hislop's political satire, *Gobble* (its storyline about "mad turkey disease" was deemed unsuitable for airing during the current *E. coli* outbreak in Scotland), a double-bill of the time-travel sitcom *(S) (2790353).* *
9.50 Birds of a Feather *(R) (S) (343547)**
10.20 News and Sport (Followed by *Weather*) *(781976).*
10.34 National Lottery Update *(470131).*
10.35 Match of the Day. Everton v Leeds United is the main event *(S) (1786179).* *
11.40 The Stand-Up Show *(S) (577353).*
12.15 Top of the Pops *(R) (S) (66377).* *
12.45 The Wiz (Sidney Lumet 1978 US). Stagnant updated version of *The Wizard of Oz*, featuring an all-black cast. Diana Ross is Dorothy (now a schoolteacher in Harlem), Michael Jackson is the Scarecrow and Richard Pryor is The Wiz *(85566613).*
2.55 Weather *(8724342). To 3.00am.*

BBC 2

7.05 Miracle on Main Street (Steve Sekely 1940 US). A depressed cabaret dancer discovers an abandoned baby on Christmas Eve. Walter Abel and Margo are the stars *(9070599).*
8.20 Peter Ibbetson (Henry Hathaway 1935 US). Very odd and strangely memorable adaptation of a George Du Maurier story in which two lovers, Gary Cooper (alive but in jail) and Ann Harding (dead but in heaven) communicate in dreams. The surrealists loved it, apparently *(2534599).* *
9.45 Sports Review of the Year, 1996. Another chance to watch last Sunday's goings on *(S) (491402).* *
11.45 Film 96 with Barry Norman. Bazza on *Evita* – from last Monday *(181808).* *
12.15 Captain Horatio Hornblower (Raoul Walsh 1951 UK). Gregory Peck plays CS Forester's Napoleonic War naval hero *(816808).* *
2.10 The Big Country (William Wyler 1958 US). Gregory Peck again, this time as a peace-loving Easterner who steps into a wild west cattle-country feud. Decent stuff, although – in the cinema, at least – the human drama is somewhat swallowed up by the vast panoramas of the south-western United States *(90818995).*
4.50 TOTP 2 *(S) (1700112).*
5.35 Gluck, Gluck, Gluck. Malcolm Gluck recommends good-value wines for Christmas *(S) (555131).* *
6.05 The Cat Show. The National Cat Club's centennial show at Olympia *(S) (297082).*
6.55 Affairs to Remember *(S) (696808).*
7.00 Christmas in Vienna. Concert of traditional and modern seasonal music from Vienna. Placido Domingo and, er, Michael Bolton join China's leading soprano, Ying Huang *(S) (5889).*
8.00 What the Papers Say. Steve Crawshawe of the *Independent* reviews the press *(S) (763599).*
8.10 Enterprise Culture Revisited. A fresh soup supplier and a venture capitalist and how they've fared since the high days of Thatcherism *(S) (439247).*
8.50 Gogs. *See Preview, above (S) (204421).* *
9.00 Musicals, Great Musicals. *See Preview, above (S) (6105421).*
10.25 On the Town (Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen 1949 US). Partly filmed on the streets of New York (revolutionary, then, for an MGM musical), producer Arthur Freed revamped the charming and sophisticated Broadway show about three sailors (Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin) with 24-hours' shore-leave in Manhattan. The result is a bit on the over-hearty side *(658518).*
12.00 The Second Greatest Story Ever Told. Drama set in 1960 and starring Mira Sorvino as a nice New York Jewish girl who takes a day trip to Coney Island and ends up with an immaculate conception. Malcolm McDowell co-stars *(4061803).* *
12.50 REM Road Movie. The gloomy American rock superstars in concert in Georgia *(S) (3706006).*
1.55 Weather *(8012716). To 2.00am.*
REGIONS. Wales: 4.50 The Car's the Star. 5.10 Gluck, Gluck, Gluck. 5.40 Wales on Saturday.

ITV/London

6.00 GMTV: 6.00 News. 6.10 Mole in the Hole. 6.30 Professor Bubble. 6.50 Barney and Friends. 7.20 Bug Alert! 7.45 Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room. 8.55 Gargoyles *(7623421).*
9.25 Cartoon Time *(3933599).*
9.35 Never a Dull Moment (Jerry Paris 1967 US). Not strictly true, as dull Disney comedy has failed actor Dick Van Dyke being mistaken for a gangster. Edward G Robinson co-stars but can't really help *(55358976).*
11.30 The Chart Show *(S) (19334).*
12.30 Champions of the Future *(57841).*
1.00 News, Weather *(82971686).* *
1.05 Local News, Weather *(82970957).* *
1.10 Cartoon Time *(82984150).*
1.20 Movies, Games and Videos *(30083247).*
1.50 The Making of Evita *(6115995).*
2.45 Splash! (Ron Howard 1984 US). Likeable, almost excellent fantasy in which Tom Hanks is saved from drowning by mermaid Daryl Hannah and falls in love with her. John Candy is let of the leash as Hanks's playboy brother and Eugene Levy does a good comic turn as a nutty professor involved in the sub-plot *(S) (776605).* *
4.45 News and Results (Then *Weather*) *(8589860).* *
5.05 Local News, Sport, Weather *(8673334).* *
5.20 Cartoon Time *(6812599).*
5.30 Sabrina the Teenage Witch *(179).* *
6.00 Gladiators *(S) (65860).* *
7.00 Blind Date *(S) (2315).* *
8.00 Family Fortunes *(S) (1082).* *
8.30 News, Weather *(944537).* *
8.44 Weather *(131537).*
8.45 Romancing the Stone (Robert Zemeckis 1984 US). Oft-screened comedy adventure in which romantic novelist Kathleen Turner gets involved in the sort of story she is only used to dreaming up – being chased around South America by fanatical generals and drug barons. Michael Douglas is the hero *(S) (291599).* *
10.45 Jack Dee's Christmas Show. Pulp and Lily Savage are the guests *(S) (905792).* *
11.30 St Elmo's Fire (Joel Schumacher 1985 US). A sort of twentysomething *Big Chill*, which follows seven college graduates as they face the trials and tribulations of the adult world. Brat-packers Rob Lowe, Demi Moore, Andrew McCarthy, Emilio Estevez and Andie MacDowell star *(359995).* *
1.25 Funny Business *(S) (3785880).*
2.00 The Escapist (Eddie Beverly Jnr 1983 US). Stuntman Bill Shirk attempts to become the world's greatest escape artist. You only have to go to bed *(68174).*
3.30 The Chart Show *(R) (S) (8258613).*
4.25 Spooks Run Wild (Phil Rosen 1941 US). Mock horror vehicle for the exhausting East Side Kids finds them sent away to summer camp, where they encounter Nazi spy rings and Bela Lugosi in his creepy country mansion *(2191174).*
5.30 News *(57025). To 6.00am.*

Channel 4

6.00 Early Morning: Sesame Street *(R) (68266).*
7.00 The Magic School Bus *(R) (S) (93353).*
7.30 Really Wild Animals *(1944976).*
7.55 Hong Kong Phooey *(R) (4481624).*
8.10 King Arthur and the Knights of Justice *(R) (7747044).*
8.35 Hang Time *(S) (6778976).*
9.00 The Morning Line *(S) (91082).*
10.00 Gazzetta Football Italia *(78044).*
11.00 Blitz! *(S) (98808).*
12.00 Sign On *(S) (28841).*
12.30 Inside the Vatican. The Inquisition, Mussolini and other skeletons in the Vatican cupboard *(R) (S) (9803082).* *
1.20 The Living Sea *(S) (30081889).*
1.50 Lust for Life (Vincente Minnelli 1956 US). Ambitious, thoughtful and a touch dull – Kirk Douglas plays Vincent Van Gogh, slowly going mad in the French countryside, as Minnelli takes less liberties than most Hollywood directors with the Dutch maestro's biography. James Donald plays his brother, Theo, and an interesting cast also includes Pamela Brown, Anthony Quinn (as Gauguin) and Lionel Jeffries *(S) (84308860).* *
4.05 The Lie Detectors. Repeat *Witness* film about private detectives *(R) (S) (1829976).* *
5.05 Brookside Omnibus *(S) (4954860).* *
6.30 Right to Reply. Access programme hosted by Roger Bolton, who invites disgruntled viewers to confront programme-makers in the studio *(S) (686).* *
7.00 News Summary and Weather *(827841).*
7.05 The Adventures of Baron Munchausen (Terry Gilliam 1989 UK). The ex-Python's inventive, effects-heavy recounting of the picaresque tall tales of the eponymous 18th-century wanderer. John Neville takes the lead, voyaging to a city on the moon and Vulcan's foundry inside Mount Etna, by way of the stomach of a monster fish. Eric Idle, Uma Thurman, Oliver Reed, Jonathan Pryce and an uncredited Robin Williams co-star *(71149131).* *
9.25 ER. Greene is sued for malpractice, and it's wedding bells for Hathaway and Taglieri *(R) (S) (351976).* *
10.20 Bandit Queen (Shekhar 1994 Ind/UK). Powerful but muddled telling of the story of the female Indian bandit, Phoolan Devi – disowned by Devi herself and banned by the Indian authorities. Seema Biswas plays the low-caste avenger, spreading terror throughout Uttar Pradesh in the 1980s *(S) (24707353).*
12.35 Late Licence Introduction *(7072483).*
12.36 Sting in Oslo. Greatest hits from the Norwegian capital, circa 1994 *(R) (14230648).*
2.40 The New Twilight Zone. A department-store Santa is sacked on Christmas Eve... *(S) (4628667).*
3.05 Mr Don and Mr George *(R) (S) (82479377).*
3.35 The Real World *(S) (8351754). To 4.30am.*

ITV/Regions

ANGLIA
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(57841).* 1.04 Anglia Air Watch *(82971686).* 1.10 Film: The Bionic Showdown *(60654889).* 5.04 Anglia Air Watch *(6834711).* 1.25am Film: Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice *(877396).* 3.20am Film: Code Name: Zebra *(632071).* 5.00-5.30am International Touring Cars *(39716).*

CENTRAL
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(57841).* 1.10 Eastern Mix *(8110841).* 1.50 Airwolf *(6115995).* 5.10 Central Match - Goals Match *(5977334).* 3.30am Central Jobfinder '96 *(47613).* 5.00-5.30am Asian Eye *(39716).*

HTV
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(57841).* 1.10 *Wales:* The House Christmas Special *(7306137).* *Wales:* The Electric Chair *(30086334).* 1.40 *Wales:* Touring Cars *(21092686).* 1.45 *West:* No Naked Games *(857599).* 2.10 *Wales:* Knight Rider *(6284421).* 2.45 *West:* World of Wonder *(453537).* 3.05 *Wales:* Cartoon Time *(8722976).* 3.15 Film: Ernest Saves Christmas *(355976).* 1.25am Film: Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice *(877396).* 3.20am Film: Code Name: Zebra *(632071).* 5.00-5.30am International Touring Cars *(39716).*

MERIDIAN
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(57841).* 1.10 International Touring Cars *(30086334).* 1.40 Beach Volleyball *(3084266).* 2.15 The Elf Who Saved Christmas *(464266).* 1.25am Film: Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice *(877396).* 3.20am Film: Code Name: Zebra *(632071).* 5.00-5.30am Freescreen *(39716).*

WESTCOUNTRY
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos *(57841).* 11.10 Film: The Bionic Showdown *(60654889).* 1.25am Film: Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice *(877396).* 3.20am Film: Code Name: Zebra *(632071).* 5.00-5.30am International Touring Cars *(39716).*

S4C
As C4 except: 10.00am Rookies *(52518).* 10.30 New Gamesmaster *(44889).* 12.30 Movie watch *(88711).* 1.00pm Lonely Planet *(9439518).* 1.45 Film: The Black Swan *(40874179).* 3.20 Film: A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court *(19310686).* 6.30 The Real Holiday Show *(686).* 7.00 News *(476131).* 7.15 Noson Lawen *(3612995).* 8.20 Chwyldro Yn Nhir Na N'og *(982537).* 8.50 Lon Goed *(408537).* 9.25 Film: Untamed Love *(35684334).* 11.05 A Perfect Candidate *(206063).* 12.35-2.40am Sting Live in Oslo *(14230648).*

Comprehensive television listings for Sunday and the week ahead are in today's issue of The Life

Radio

Radio 1
(97.6-99.8MHz FM)
7.00am Kevin Greening **10.00** Dave Pearce **1.00** Jo Whiley **4.00** John Peel. *See Choice.* **7.00** Danny Rampling: Lovegroove Dance Party **9.00** Radio 1 Rap Show **12.00** The Reggae Dancehall Nite **2.00** Essential Mix **4.00-7.00am** Charlie Jordan

Radio 2
(88.-90.1MHz FM)
6.00am Mo Dutta **8.05** Brian Matthew **10.00** Steve Wright **1.00** *Arthur Smith's Amusing Bits* **1.30** Smith and Jones Sound Off **2.00** Judi Spiers **4.00** Nick Barraclough **5.00** The Tycoon of Teen **6.00** So Here It Is, Merry Christmas **7.00** I Write the Songs. **7.30** A Southwark Christmas **9.30** David Jacobs **10.00** Bob Harris **12.05** Charles Nove **4.00-6.00am** Mo Dutta

Radio 3
(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.55am Weather, News Headlines. **7.00** Record Review **8.45** An Advent Calendar. **9.00** Christmas Does... **9.30** Critics' Choices. *See Choice.* **11.00** The Record Industry Today. With the media still full of doom and gloom about the state of the record industry, Anthony Burton discusses the issues with record company executives. **11.20** Reissues of the Year. Richard Osborne is joined by David Mellor and Robert Cowan to discuss the best reissues of 1996. **12.00** Private Passions. Michael Berkeley talks to Sir Claus Moser, chairman of the British Museum Development Fund, whose musical choices include chamber works by Schubert, Mozart and Beethoven. **1.00** News: Vintage Years. Annette Morreau explores the life and recordings of Austrian cellist Emanuel Feuermann. (3:4). **3.00** The BBC Orchestras. Rachmaninov: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Symphony No 1 in D minor. **4.15** A Portrait of Nicholas Lanier. Paul Agnew and Christopher Wilson perform a selection of Lanier's songs. **5.00** Jazz Record Requests. **5.45** The Gonzaga Court. The Missa Domenicalis by Wert, punctuated with motets by Contino and Guglielmo Gonzaga. **6.30** Live from the Met. *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* A magically evocative and humorous operatic score by Benjamin Britten.

Choice

The afternoon play is **A Little Princess** (2.30pm R4) – Francis Hodgson Burnett's story of a spoiled girl being plunged into poverty and getting what's coming to her. For the discerning musician, Record Review offers the annual **Critics' Choice** (9.30am R3), and John Peel counts down the **Festive 50** (4pm R1).

10.00 Speaking Volumes. Kevin Jackson examines Ernst Junger's life and writing in the light of a new biography and talks to John Keegan about the current popular interest in military history. **10.30** Andrea Marcovicci. The singer recorded in cabaret last June at Pizza on the Park, where he performed theatre love songs by Kern, Rodgers and Hart, Hammerstein, Gershwin, Lerner, Weill and Sondheim. **12.00** Now and Then. Judith Weir: Distance and Enchantment. Thea Musgrave: Elegy. Domus. **12.30** Mysterioso. Continuing his exploration of the life of pianist and composer Thelonious Monk, Ian Carr concentrates on 1959-60, a period graphically recalled by saxophonist Steve Lacy. **1.00** Through the Night. With Donald Macleod. **5.00-6.00am** Sequence.

Radio 4
(92.4-94.6MHz FM, 198kHz LW)
6.00am News. **6.10** Farming Today. **6.50** Prayer for the Day. **7.00** Today. **9.00 (LW)** Test Match Special. Live coverage from Bulawayo of day four of the First Test. With commentary by Peter Baxter, Henry Blofeld and Simon Mann. **9.00 (FM)** News. **9.05 (FM)** Sport on 4. **9.30 (FM)** Breakaway. **10.00 (FM)** Loose Ends. **11.00 (FM)** The Week in Westminster. **11.30 (FM)** Best of EuroFile. **12.00 (FM)** Walters' Winter Wonderland. John Walters takes a jaundiced view of Christmasses past, recalling the carol singers who refused to do requests and the mysterious annual case of the missing nutcrackers. **12.25** News Quiz of the Year. (FM only until 12.55pm) (1/2). **1.00** News. **1.10 (FM)** Any Questions? **1.10 (LW)** Test Match Special. Further coverage of the First Test, fourth day from Bulawayo. **1.55** Shipping Forecast. **2.00 (FM)** Any Answers? **2.00 (LW)** Test Match Special. **2.30** Saturday Playhouse: *A Little Princess.* (FM only until 3.00pm) Drama in which a wealthy girl discovers a different side to life when she is forced into poverty, quickly learning that kindness and imagination count for more than money. *See Choice.* **4.00** Making History. Continuing his profile of the work of historians, Christopher Andrew meets a Cambridge don who has found a new lease of life thanks to the music of Wagner, comforts a near suicidal PhD student and discovers some of the major international secrets to be found on the Internet. **4.30** Ad Lib. Robert Robinson talks to five peers of the realm about the problems and privileges of their positions. **5.00** Missing in Austin, Texas. A profile of the American actress Nancy Cole, who disappeared in 1987 en route from Austin, Texas, to New Orleans. **5.40** In Celebration. A light-hearted look at that membrophonic marvel, the kazoo. **6.00** Six O'Clock News. **6.25** Week Ending. **6.50** All About Eve. **7.20** Kaleidoscope Feature. Midlands vocal group Black Voices talk about how they have been influenced by growing up with the Gospels, and perform selections from their repertoire. **7.50** On These Days. **8.50** Saturday Night Theatre: *Paupers and Pig Killers.* Dramatisation of the diary of Somerset parson, William Holland, who is having trouble collecting tithes off the farmers at harvest time, despite his resolution to get everything in on time. **9.35** Classics with Kay. **9.50** Ten to Ten. **10.00** News. **10.15** Newgate Calendar. By Christopher Denys. A dramatisation of the life and times of notorious Newgate inmate, Jonathan Wilde. (1/2). **11.15** Kiri. *Dame Kiri Te Kanawa* tells June Knox-Mawer about her debut performance in New York. **11.45** Uncle Mort's Celtic Fringe. By Peter Tinniswood. Carter Brandon continues his journey through Wales in the company of his Uncle Mort. **12.00** News. **12.30** The Late Story: *The Christmas Party. By Dina Mehta.* **12.48** Shipping Forecast. **1.00-6.00am** As World Service.

Radio 5
(693, 909kHz MW)
6.05am Dirty Tackle **6.30** The Breakfast Show **9.05** Weekend with Kershaw and Whittaker **11.05** Top Gear **11.35** Hold the Front Page **12.05** Baker and Kelly Upfront **1.05** Sport on Five **6.06** Six-O-Six **8.05** The Treatment **9.05** Dallyn UK **10.05** Brief Lives **10.35** Word Up! **11.00** Night Extra **12.05** Night Talk **2.00** Up All Night **5.00-6.00am** Morning Reports

Classic FM
(100.0-101.9MHz FM)
6.00am Sarah Lucas **9.00** Countdown **12.00** Gardening Forum **1.00** Alan Mann **4.00** Nick Bailey. **7.00** Russian Revelation **8.00** Evening Concert. Berlioz: L'Enfance du Christ. **10.00** The Classic Quiz **12.00** Andre Leon **4.00** The Travel Guide **5.00-6.00am** Michael Fanstone

Virgin Radio
(1215, 1197-1260kHz MW 105.8MHz FM)
6.00am Janey Lee Grace **8.00** Russ and Jono's Greatest Hits **10.00** Jeremy Clark **2.00** Mark Forrest **6.00** Lynn Parsons **10.00** Robin Banks **2.00-6.00am** Howard Pearce

World Service
(198kHz LW)
1.00am Newsdesk **1.30** Quote...Unquote **2.00** Newsday **2.30** People & Politics **3.00** News **3.15** Sports Roundup **3.30** Music Review **4.00** Newsdesk **4.30** Short Story **4.45** On the Move **5.00** Newsday **5.30-6.00am** In Praise of God

Satellite

SKY 1
7.00am My Little Pony *(8902599).* **7.25** Dynamo Duck *(6285624).* **7.30** Defy and His Friends *(32266).* **8.00** Orson and Olivia *(87518).* **8.30** Free Willy *(86889).* **9.00** The Best of Sally Jessy Raphael *(60470).* **10.00** Designing Women *(19204).* **10.30** Murphy Brown *(99353).* **11.00** Parker Lewis Can't Lose *(26421).* **11.30** Real TV *(27150).* **12.00** WWF *(29082).* **1.00** Star Trek Marathon: Star Trek *(71042).* **2.00** Star Trek – The Next Generation *(69763).* **3.00** Star Trek – The Next Generation *(38266).* **4.00** Star Trek – The Next Generation *(17773).* **5.00** Star Trek – Deep Space Nine *(61570).* **7.00** Star Trek – Voyager *(68995).* **8.00** A Captain's Log *(44315).* **9.00** Outer Limits *(64179).* **10.00** The Extraordinary *(67266).* **11.00** Stand and Deliver *(18402).* **11.30** The Movie Show *(19268).* **12.00** Dream On *(90754).* **12.30** The Fifth Corner *(93272).* **1.30** The Edge *(90984).* **2.00-7.00am** Hit Mix Long Play *(35087).*

SKY 2
7.00pm Earth 2 *(1182150).* **8.00** Jag *(1168570).* **9.00** VR5 *(1188334).* **10.00** Tales from the Crypt *(7971518).* **10.30** Tales from the Crypt *(7980266).* **11.00** The Hit Mix *(1506044).* **12.00** Film: Billy Budd (1962) *(2908990).* **2.00-7.00am** Hit Mix *(5254174).*

SKY MOVIES
6.00am Cult Rescue (1994) *(77686).* **8.00** Heart Like a Wheel (1983) *(97605).* **10.00** A Perfect Couple (1979) *(11063).* **12.00** A Christmas Without Snow (1980) *(87228).* **2.00** Gypsy (1993) *(15624353).* **4.25** Cops and Robbersons (1994) *(76097131).* **6.00** Baby's Day Out (1994) *(61082).* **8.00** The Specialist (1994) *(40599).* **10.00** Judge Dredd (1995) *(913957).* **11.40** Object of Obsession (1994) *(179119).* **1.20** Judge Dredd (1995) *(580483).* **2.55** Car 54, Where Are You? (1994) *(8693532).* **4.20-6.00am** Baby's Day Out (1994) *(85928938).*

MOVIE CHANNEL
6.00am Lancer Spy (1937) *(4762841).* **7.20** Thunder Birds (1942) *(1492624).* **8.40** Wake Up and Dream (1946) *(14515976).* **10.15** The Face on the Milk Carton (1995) *(21047112).* **12.00** Midnight Run for Your Life (1994) *(78570).* **2.00** The Christmas Coal Mine Miracle (1977) *(49860).* **4.00** Monkey Trouble (1994) *(6286).* **6.00** White Fang II: The Myth of the White Wolf (1994) *(69624).* **8.00** Don Juan DeMarco (1995) *(31841).* **10.00** Phantasm III (1994) *(31624).* **11.30** Trapped in Space (1994) *(420095).* **1.05** The Doomsday Gun (1994) *(417938).* **2.55** Trancers V: Sudden Deth (1994) *(6705396).* **4.10-6.00am** The Christmas Coal Mine Miracle (1977) *(85929667).*

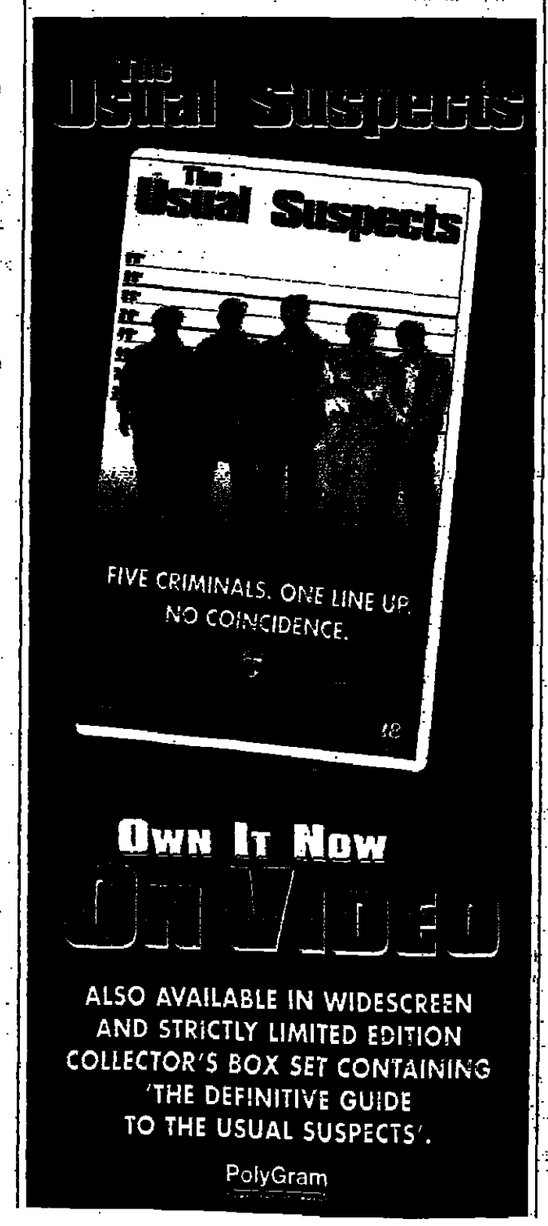
SKY MOVIES GOLD
4.00pm Meet Me in St Louis (1944) *(8431808).* **6.00** The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) *(3828247).* **8.00** The Long Walk Home (1989) *(3823792).* **10.00** To Live and Die in LA (1985) *(5040063).* **12.00** The Panic in Needle Park (1971) *(5393975).* **1.50** Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer: Murder Me, Murder You (1983) *(5623464).* **3.30-4.45am** The Circus (1928) *(76140280).*

SKY SPORTS 1
7.00am Racing *(66247).* **7.30** Cricket: First Test – Zimbabwe Vs England – Live *(1421686).* **3.30** Sports Saturday *(659111).* **5.30** NHL: Power Week *(21518).* **6.30** Ice Hockey: Manchester Vs Ayr *(577995).* **9.00** Cricket *(341614).* **11.30** Rugby *(52131).* **1.30-4.00am** Ice Hockey *(621957).*

SKY SPORTS 2
7.00am Soccer AM *(26688860).* **11.00** Football *(2718150).* **12.00** Football: Preview *(2139696).* **2.00** Rugby: Pilkington Cup - Live *(6402808).* **4.00** Figure Skating *(1454131).* **6.00** Football: Superstar Coaching *(3305624).* **6.30** Futbol Mundial *(3396976).* **7.00** Football: Spanish League *(8357686).* **9.30** Trans World Sport *(4364179).* **10.30** World Sport *(1906792).* **11.00** Darts – Wilson Vs Bristow *(2719995).* **11.30-1.00am** Football: Liverpool Vs Everton 1989 *(3960402).*

SKY SPORTS 3
12.00noon Hold the Back Page *(43438957).* **1.00** Surfing *(43447605).* **2.00** Pool *(39802088).* **5.00** Trans World Sport *(41984599).* **6.00** Skiff Sailing *(83678841).* **6.30** High 5 *(83692421).* **7.00** Asian Golf *(41819044).* **8.00** Pool *(36449315).* **11.00** Skiff Sailing *(10766179).* **11.30-12.00midnight** High 5 *(94126841).*

LIVE TV
6.00am Revelations **6.30** Looking for Love **7.00** Spanish Archer **7.30** Mind and Body **8.00** Why Files **8.30** Video Box **9.00** Psychic Pets **9.30** Fashion **10.00** Revelations **10.30** Looking for Love **11.00** Mind and Body **11.30** Spanish Archer **12.00** Campus Capers **12.30** Why Files **1.00** Looking for Love **1.30** Fate and Fortune **2.00** Fashion **2.30** Mind and Body **3.00** Video Box **3.30** Pin Money **4.00** Saturday Sport **5.30** Seventies Pop **6.00** Fashion **6.30** Psychic Pets **7.00** Spanish Archer **7.30** Revelations **8.00** Bushido **9.03** Why Files **9.30** Looking for Love **10.03** Saturday Sport **10.30** Stand-Up Live **11.03** Fate and Fortune **11.30** The Sex Show **12.00-6.00am** Night-Time Programmes



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Unsung heroes who filter out the sleaze

Regulators – they sound like the heroes of a high plains Western, all leather coats and smoking six guns. The reality is, of course, rather more prosaic. These people rejoice in such unwieldy titles as Director General, Office of Telecommunications. They inhabit drab standard-issue offices and – no offence – they tend to be somewhat less than charismatic. And yet, if "opposition" means the scrutiny and checking of established power, they are some of the most important opposition figures in Britain. They are more aggressive and outspoken than many Labour or Liberal Democrat front-benchers. And, of course, they have much more power.

So, perhaps not surprisingly, the public has come to invest trust in the regulatory offices created since privatisations of gas, water, rail and more recently, the lottery. In general, and certainly during the past week, the signs are that that trust has not been misplaced. On digital television, Don Cruickshank, head of Oftel, looks like he will make the best of the hand dealt him by the sloppy policy-makers of the Department of Trade and Industry. John Swift, the rail regulator, fiercely denounced Railtrack's under-investment. His record is far from perfect but there has to be a warm welcome for his readiness to dig for information and pass it on – as of this week, Railtrack is on notice.

These are performances government and its officials say they are happy with. But they say it through gritted teeth. "Independence" is never really popular in the corridors of Whitehall. The rest of us have begun, in a quiet way, to take the regulators' freedom for granted. Yet, if we stand back for a moment, and consider their brief history, this power is a remarkable thing. Regulation and bureaucracy were what Mrs Thatcher pledged herself to cutting. It was not that long ago Lord Young of Graffham was setting up a Deregulation Unit to produce White Papers with long lists of rules to be rescinded. In fact, when it came to it, people were found to be rather keen on health and safety at work. Even staunch Conservative voters were unenthusiastic about repealing the rules on development control and land use. (In a contest between ideological deregulators and Nimbys, the latter always win hands down.)

Today's regulators represent a further step – the return of powerful and popular bureaucrats. Why did the Conservatives tolerate this? Simply because, having privatised some of the most politically sensitive services, without properly breaking up the resulting monopolies, they were scared stiff of what companies and voters would say if they felt cheated or abused.

So far, an interesting lesson in the political limitations of radical Toryism. But the shape of the regulatory offices looks odder still when we consider how personal and discretionary they are. This is against the ideology of the past 17 years in a serious way. For instance, Friedrich

Hayek was one of Lady Thatcher's gurus. He was a root and branch antagonist of giving officials a lot of personal discretion – that really was, he argued, the road to serfdom. Yet here we have Ms Spottiswoode in gas, Professor Littlechild in electricity, Mr Byatt in water and Mr Cruickshank in telecoms making individual and sometimes idiosyncratic judgements about price levels, competition and industrial structure – all very important political questions.

For democrats, the regulatory offices leave much to be desired. Notionally accountable to Parliament, the regulators have only to produce an annual report and turn up, if they care to, in response to select committee requests. They are effectively immune from Parliamentary scrutiny. Their judgements are, it is true, subject to inspection by the courts in judicial review and by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. But all the courts can do is determine that their personal judgements were exercised after due care and deliberation. As for the MMC, it too is an odd animal – a quango made up of political appointees which is supposed to be fair and independent. As for the regulators' relations with ministers and Whitehall, well, they ought to be prickly and suspicious. Sir James Mackinnon at gas set a good example here – a regulator's honesty correlates with the degree of discontent among civil servants.

For all those ambiguities of structure, the regulatory offices work quite well. Even more important, the regulators command public confidence. When on Thursday Mr Cruickshank did the media round explaining how he plans to monitor Rupert Murdoch's control of the entry point for digital signals into the home, he sounded rather like the people's champion. Goliath may be big but David's footwork looks nifty; he may even have a pebble or two in his pouch. As for Mr Swift at the Office of Rail Regulation, he has turned out to be a source of vital information – for example, about investment levels – which even Labour in its cautious pre-election mode will surely find it hard not to exploit. Assessing these complex privatised companies requires, above all, huge amounts of technical information. We have never needed such activist regulation more.

So they are imperfect, sit unhappily in democratic life and are at odds with the prevailing ideology of Conservative Britain. Even the regulators' independence cannot be taken for granted. With government gongs and subtle hints about team playing, let alone the ever present risk of "capture" by the industry under regulation, the system is fraught with inducements to bend. Yet, more by luck than design, the regulatory offices have become high offices of state. They have, overall, confounded the critics. So, what are we saying – that this is a happy political story, something successful, even cheering? Well, yes, slightly to our own surprise, we are. It is, after all, the season for optimism.

▪ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ▪

Forget Christmas, and have a merry pagan Winter Solstice festival

Sir: Two articles decrying the way we celebrate Christmas were published on 19 December. One was by a prominent hardline atheist, Richard Dawkins, the other by a prominent liberal Christian, Don Cupitt.

Both have missed the point of Christmas: that it is not primarily a Christian event, and never has been. It is the pagan festival of the winter solstice, already thousands of years old when Christianity arrived on the scene. The ancient druids celebrated the rebirth of the sun; the Greeks made it the birthday of Zeus; the Romans debased it and called it Saturnalia; the Jews attached it to the rebirth of their religion after it had been "killed" by the Syrians; the Christians turned it into Jesus's birthday: and nowadays it is used to celebrate consumerism.

What of it? Christmas is what Professor Dawkins would call a successful "meme", an idea that shows great adaptability and Darwinian fitness. When consumerism declines and another religion rises in its place (as will surely happen one day), Christmas will find a way of attaching itself to that, too. After all, it has even transplanted itself to Australia, changing itself into a summer-solstice celebration. A festival that could survive that could survive anything.
RUPERT LEE
London SW14

Sir: Richard Dawkins is doubly wrong ("Who needs a euphemism for Christmas?", 19 December).

The current tendency to turn Christmas into a syncretic "holiday season" involves not so much an evasive betrayal of the Nativity as a restoration of the midwinter festival to its pagan origins before it was hijacked by the Christians in the fourth century. Few elements of the traditional Christmas have much to do with the stories in Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, and most come from popular customs from various cultures. Anyway, isn't it good to have a festival which can appeal to everyone?

And young children can and do have theological opinions, and may indeed be atheists. Having been brought up in an atheist family, I certainly knew by the time I went to school that there were no gods, any more than fairies or ghosts or angels. The same was true of many children I knew then, and also of my own children. Anyway, aren't all children atheists, until they are told otherwise?

In this context, the imposition of religious drama on schoolchildren is surely as objectionable as the imposition of religious worship, however eclectic or syncretic its content, despite the common practice of Nativity plays, the co-operation of teachers and parents, the approval of religious and educational leaders, and your editorial endorsement (leading article, 20 December). It cannot help involving indoctrination, which Richard Dawkins rightly condemns, as well as widespread embarrassment for believers in other religions or none.
NICOLAS WALTER
Rationalist Press Association
London N1

Sir: Richard Dawkins asks if we have ever met an uneducated atheist – the answer is, frequently! Through school and parish work I have met appalling ignorance from both young people and parents who think that belief compels you to hold that there is an old man in the sky with a white beard, and that the world was made in seven days. And there are the inacho crowd who reject religion as something for women and children.

Atheists can be intelligent, educated, ignorant, immature, kind, selfish, and so on. Belief does not make one a saint or a bigot, necessarily. Educated, thinking, intelligent people can be believers or atheists.

Much that Dawkins said about attitudes to Christmas I heartily endorse, but he seems to gloat that the atheist is the calm, sensible thinker who won't have truck with muddle or hypocrisy. It is a little more complicated than that.
The Rev KEVIN O'DONNELL
Crowthorne, Berkshire

Sir: I was most concerned to read the report on charity card sales (18 December). If I had been able to speak to your reporter, I would have assured her that I would take immediate steps to check the charity cards in all our branches and to remove any offenders from sale. This has now been done.

The amount that goes to the charity from each sale is, of course, set by the publisher and not the retailer, but our customers can be assured that we take the subject very seriously. Books etc is known as an ethical company and our directors will shortly be conducting an investigation into this whole area.

Christmas cards have become a substantial source of income for many reputable charities – we sell cards which benefit Oxfam among others – and I hope that people will not be deterred from buying all charity cards and so adversely affect their income at this important time.
RICHARD JOSEPH
Group Chief Executive
Books etc Ltd
London WC2

Sir: May I, as a very small card publisher, comment on your article "Card retailers are charity Scrooges".

For the publisher who has to produce cards more cheaply at Christmas (achieved only by large runs) the charity sums donated may be fairly generous when compared with the profit margin. The sum of 30p in the pound, as suggested by Nigel Griffiths, is unrealistic.

It should be remembered that some charity shops selling Christmas cards who give the largest proportion to charity are not commercial retailers and therefore do not have the full retail and staff costs to meet.
ELIZABETH MANSON BAHR
Bizzie Lizzie Cards
Oxford

Philip: phone-in polls off target

Sir: The contention ("Sorry, but I still think I'm right", 20 December) that the GMTV and Radio 5 telephone pools indicate a shift in public opinion on gun control compared to NOP's October research is silly.

Like all responsible polls, NOP based its conclusions on questions asked of a sample of people designed to be representative of the population. A "telephone poll" reflects the views of a self-selected assortment of people who just happened to be tuned in and sufficiently interested to pick up the phone. As Polly Toynbee notes in connection with the *Today* Personality of the Year vote ("What's wrong with the BBC today"), such exercises "only test which interest groups have the fastest fingers on their telephone buttons".
ALLEN COOPER
Walton-on-Thames, Surrey

Sir: Prince Philip should now give Britain a lead, and ask his wife to rearm the sentries outside their London home with tennis rackets or possibly lacrosse sticks.
CHRIS ROSE
Lewes, East Sussex

Sir: Perhaps the Duke of Edinburgh might like to consider the implications of replacing the bullet-proof glass in the royal cars with cricket netting.
MARK NEIL
Oxford

Signs on the footway

Sir: With reference to "Motorists driven round bend by poor road signs" (16 December), I hope readers noticed where the "poor signs" in the photograph were. Every single one was on a pole in the pavement.

Pedestrians have to put up not only with filthy, exhaust-polluted air, inconveniently placed, time-wasting "pedestrian crossings", and the noise and lights of constant traffic. We are also forced to share our footways with increasing numbers of signs dedicated to easing life for drivers. When will authorities stop regarding the car as king of the public highway, and give walking due recognition as the most widely used and least polluting form of transport?
Councillor S D DHALL
Oxfordshire CC, Green Party)
Oxford

In mourning: a woman placing flowers on a memorial to the victims in Grozny yesterday Photograph: Reuter

Barbaric killing of Red Cross workers

Sir: Yesterday was an international day of mourning for the six Red Cross workers murdered in Chechnya on Tuesday. The killing of these innocent volunteers, whilst they slept in their beds at a hospital, has appalled the international community.

These murders are unprecedented in the history of the humanitarian movement. This is not an issue of security, but of barbarism. Even within the local context of the savage war in Chechnya, the murders make no sense. Whatever the motive, none of the warring parties can possibly extract any serious advantage from them.

The consequences of this event go far beyond Grozny. Such an attack ruthlessly undermines the position of the International Red Cross as one of the most neutral of agencies, and affects all of us who strive so hard to provide humanitarian aid. Most of all it affects people in terrible need throughout the world.

As one of the few humanitarian agencies active in Chechnya, we have lost six personal friends as well as colleagues. We knew the value of their work in helping civilians caught up in the war. We understood and shared the noble humanitarian ideal for which they have lost their lives. And we would like to express our profound condolences to their families and colleagues.
Dr CHRISTOPHER BESSE
on behalf of the staff and volunteers at Medical Emergency Relief International (Merlin)
London W1

Making motorists pay the NHS

Sir: I refer to Yvette Cooper's article "Hit-and-run attack on the public" (13 December). The Law Commission was concerned that a wrongdoer is better off injuring someone poor than someone rich enough to afford private medical insurance. The wrongdoer (or in practice his insurer) will pay for the private health care after a road accident; he will not contribute to the medical attention a poorer person receives in the NHS.

Ms Cooper is, of course, right to say that the proposal is concerned with shifting resources. The Law Commission's argument is that the cost of a legal wrong should be borne by the wrongdoer (and if he is insured, by his insurer), and not by us all. The Law Commission's proposal is predicated on a victim's existing cause of action. The NHS's clawback from the wrongdoer would operate only when the victim has won his case. It is wrong to suggest that the proposal will lead to a US-style litigation culture.
WILLIAM SMITH
London W14

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

Bet your bottom dollar on the peso

Sir: About the dollar. Both Mr Mangles and Professor Pope (letters, 19 December) convincingly link the $ sign to the Spanish "piece of eight" or peso, but differ in that the first sees it in the figure 8 while the second reads it as a squashed up "pS".

Presumably there is evidence for both explanations. However, I lean towards Mr Mangles', because the Dutch way of writing an 8 is to begin at the waist, not at the top, and to end up with the shape of a stencilled "S". I would expect this to be a standard usage in pre-independence New York, originally colonised by the Dutch. Some form of cancellation would be needed to distinguish the sign from succeeding figures, hence the bar.

Incidentally, the *daler* is still visible in the name for a two-and-a-half guilder coin, the *Rijksdaalder*, popularly known as the *Rix*.
BERNARD NOBLE
The Hague

Sir: The Spanish American dollar, or silver piece of eight *reales* was the principal unit of currency and account used in North America prior to US independence, and was adopted by Congress as the unit of currency in 1792, after which the first US dollars were minted in 1794 (letters, 17, 18, 19 December).

The reverse of the Spanish dollar bore two vertical columns, representing the Pillars of Hercules, each wrapped with an S-shaped scroll bearing part of the motto *nec plus ultra*. This was supposedly used as a convenient abbreviation in $ accounts, in North, Central, and South America.
ROBERT COOK
London W11

Illiterateness

Sir: Television and radio weather forecasters seem determined to invent a language of their own. To complement the nouns "fog", "sleet", "mist", "cloud" and so on there are the adjectives "foggy", "sleety", "misty", "cloudy". It is ridiculous to add "-ness" to each of these to give "fogginess", "sleetiness", "mistiness", "cloudiness". Where will it end? Sunshininess? Thunderiness? Hurricaniness?
LOIS REYNOLDS
Hathersage, Derbyshire

LETTER *from* THE EDITOR

Marketing men go on about ideal target-market readers – broadly speaking, those among you who, having the largest amount of spending money and the least sense, appeal most to advertisers. Some papers take this more seriously than others

Years ago on *The Economist*, I remember being exhorted, half-seriously, by some marketing guy there to go up to any badly dressed or impoverished-looking person who happened to be reading the paper, and snatch it away: they would rather have had fewer, high-income readers than more readers who would dilute the "quality".

Well, one thing that can be confidently said about *The Independent* is that we have a more exclusive readership than certain other papers. (I could cope with it being a little less exclusive, but that's another story.) In fact, all newspapers have heterodox readerships – there are, no doubt, *Mirror*-reading duchesses and labourers who take the *Financial Times*.

This week, though, I was going to Manchester by train when a seriously dangerous-looking man sat down opposite me. He had, I think it's safe to say, more metal stuck through his face than you'd find on a Fifties Chevrolet, spiked hair and a new scar.

As I tried to avoid his eye, and shifted uneasily in my seat, he reached into his bag, drew out... an *Independent*, turned to the comment pages and began (I think) with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's article on European integration, which he studied with utter absorption. People aren't what they seem – (not a bad motto for journalism, or anything else).

Whenever republicanism seems a forlorn hope in Britain, a member of the Royal Family comes along and gives it a fillip. Or Philip, in this case – the Alf Garnett of world royalty. But I have no time for those who say the Duke of Edinburgh should shut up.

Yes, all journalists have a strong vested interest in people not shutting up; but even leaving that aside, freedom of speech includes everyone, even the Queen's husband. Our Island Story would be a considerably shorter and duller tale were it not for the citizens' inalienable right to stand up and make a complete idiot of themselves in public. Judging by the frequency with which he exercises that right, Citizen Philip understands this full well.

Another theme of this week, as so many other weeks, has been food and drink, and what it does to our bodies. (Apart from keeping them going, of course – a side-effect of fat and sugar consumption that many "health" researchers underestimate.) We have had questions raised about genetically altered soya, about lamb, and about

> As I tried to avoid the dangerous-looking man's eye, he reached into his bag, and drew out... an *Independent*

the *E. Coli* affair, whose 13th victim died and which has so far made 163 people ill.

These stories seem to have become as endemic as some of the conditions they describe, simply another part of modern life. Some "scares" are now known to be very hard fact – the cancer-smoking link above all. Others are possibilities, "early warning science" about chances of ill-health at the margin. And about these we must all make personal decisions.

My personal limit was reached this week on the revelation that malt whisky contains more cancer-inducing agents than other whiskies. Worse still, Laphroaig, the wonderful Islay malt, has the highest content of something described as PAH. Pah, indeed! Laphroaig is the peat-scented, life-enhancing, ultimate fluid, without which life itself is a meaningless void. It is the peer of malts, the very milk of nature. I have a bottle waiting for Christmas week. I hope all readers have as happy a time as I will while disposing of it.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Political leadership is like being a teacher. It's about changing the language of others. I say it and go on saying it until I hear the man in the pub saying my words back to me – **John Hume**, *leader of Ulster's SDLP party*

I don't wear women's clothes. I wear my clothes – **Eddie Izzard**, *transvestite comic*

I do not believe in this pairing system. I regard it as organised truancy – **Dennis Skinner**, *Labour MP, on the Commons voting row*

I don't expect Labour to welcome these figures. Whenever the sun shines, they pray for rain – **John Major**, *when the unemployment figures fell below the 2 million mark*

Democracy is a good thing in moderation – **Peter Luff**, *Conservative MP*

A judge's life is a desperate attempt to keep your head below the parapet – **Mr Justice Rougier**

Thoughts of marriage and children are far off. Perhaps I will become a nun, who knows? – **Liz Hurley**

When we look to Eastern spirituality for help, why not start by looking at Christianity, which was born in the Middle East? – **Dr Patrick Sookhdeo**, *Director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity*

The trouble with the rat race is, even if you win, you are still a rat – **Cher**, *pop singer*

analysis

Fishing for trouble? A Northern Irish boat goes for its quota off the coast of Ireland

Photograph: Crispin Rodwell/Reuter

Britain's fishy role in the quota-hopping scandal

Foreign vessels are legally taking a large chunk of the UK's fishing quota. But it is our own government's double-think and double-talk that is to blame rather than the minefield of EU rules, says John Lichfield

Take a typical fishermen's tale of claim and counter-claim, *disputed figures and* outright distortions. Add a rich tartar sauce of Europhobia. You have a bouillabaisse of a row on fishing quotas, cuts in the British trawler fleet and, most of all, "quota-hoppers" – Spanish and Dutch boats flying British flags and catching part of the EU fish stocks allocated to Britain.

Hostilities resumed, briefly, this week. They will be rejoined in earnest when EU fisheries ministers meet again in April.

The ministers agreed in the early hours of yesterday on catch quotas for next year, which despite scientific recommendation for steep cuts are only a little below this year's figures. But this was just a skirmish: the real battles lie ahead.

The Government is still blocking agreement on restructuring (ie, reducing) all EU fishing fleets. It is refusing to agree any of the wider EU treaty reforms under discussion *in the Inter-Governmental* Conference unless "quota-hopping" is declared unconstitutional under European law.

Arcane as it sounds to the urban, chattering and non-seafaring classes, fish may replace mad cow disease, and rival the single currency, as the main Euro-battleground in the run-up to the general election. It is also one Euro-dispute in which Labour says it will be just as tough as the Tories if Tony Blair wins in the spring.

Who is right and who is wrong? Does it matter?

On the face of it, Britain has a good case. It is an undisputed fact that 150 large UK fishing vessels, about a fifth of the tonnage of the British fleet, are Spanish- and Dutch-owned and crewed. They deliver their catches direct to Spain or Holland or land their fish at British ports for shipment by freezer truck to their home countries. The vessels carry British flags and British fishing licences, so their catches are counted against the British quota.

Manifestly unfair? The British Government (having for many years defended, and even encouraged, the practice) decided in 1988 that it was unacceptable. It passed a law requiring three-quarters of the shareholders of British trawler-owning companies to be British. Three years later, the law was quashed by the European Court as contrary to EU rules on freedom of movement of people and capital.

This was inevitable; it was a manifestly discriminatory piece of legislation. Even British officials admit in private that it was a clumsy law. On the other hand, the fact that foreign vessels (in all but flag) can take up to 46 per cent of the British quota of valuable species, such as plaice and hake, makes a manifest nonsense of the 13-year-old EU policy of splitting fish catches into national quotas.

The European Court ruling produced choreographed outrage on the part of Euro-sceptic newspapers, and politicians and government ministers who had never previously exhibited much interest in fishermen or fishing ports. The Spanish were "pirates" who were "plundering" our fish. The outrage doubled and trebled when the EU Commission announced last summer that it wanted Britain to cut its fishing fleet by 40 per cent over seven years (and other EU fleets to make similar cuts) to protect threatened fish stocks. The EU, said the Euro-sceptics, was threatening to destroy what remained of a British fishing industry, already "decimated" by the EU fisheries policy.

In fact, the British fishing fleet has *not* been damaged by the Common Fisheries Policy. The middle-distance and inshore fleets, which are covered by the EU policy, increased in size for most of the Eighties and have started to decline rapidly only in the past few years (when fish stocks all over the world have been under severe pressure). If you exclude the quota-hoppers from the UK figures, the decline is steeper. But the economics of fish is local and variable. Some British ports and some types of vessel have done very well indeed. Huge sums are being paid by British fishermen at this moment, for new super-trawlers.

The demise of the huge trawler ports, such as Hull, Grimsby and Lowestoft, often blamed on Brussels, was caused by the Icelandic and Norwegian cod wars of the Sixties and Seventies. Those two nations extended their fisheries limits to 12, then 50, then 200 miles, ejecting our traditional, long-distance trawler fleets from once-rich hunting grounds for cod and haddock. This had nothing to do with the EU. Euro-sceptics who argue that Britain should join the Icelanders and declare our own 200-mile limit are arguing, in effect, for withdrawal from the EU. It would be politically impossible to squeeze the fish paste back into the tube in any other way.

There can be no doubt that the Common Fisheries Policy has miserably failed to deliver the flourishing fish stocks it promised. Why? Poor policing by national governments; overfishing by all fleets, Britain included; the setting of quotas too high, under political pressure. (This week's quota deal is another classic example of myopia: short-term good news for the industry, at the expense of longer-term pain as stocks decline further.)

But these are arguments for a tougher and more rational fisheries policy; not for British withdrawal. In any case, the quota-hopper problem results directly from British government double-think and double-talk, rather than EU rules.

Everyone agrees that too many European boats are chasing too few fish. Britain, along with other EU states, has agreed three Europe-wide programmes to pay off fishermen and scrap their boats. But the British Government refused at first to fund its share (30 per cent) of the compensation, so for many years the scheme was not available to British fishermen.

Why not? The Treasury blocked the scheme because it would have reduced the annual UK budget rebate from Brussels. Whatever the EU spent on paying off British boats would be deducted from the celebrated Thatcher cash-back scheme, which reduces Britain's net budget deficit with the EU. The Government preferred to spend both its money, and the EU money, in other ways. Fisheries were not a priority.

This is complex but it is vital to an understanding of quota-hoppers. In the early Eighties, there were a couple of dozen. Their numbers exploded during the decade. Why? Because British trawler owners sold their boats to the Spanish and Dutch. Or in some cases they sold them to British brokers, who sold them to the Spanish and Dutch. Why? Because they were offering the best price.

The main alternative – EU scrapping grants – were not on offer in Britain. Why were the foreign skippers so keen to buy British boats? Because under British, not EU, regulations, if you bought the boat, you also got the licence to fish and a guaranteed share of the national quota.

It is a purely British government policy to break down the national quota boat by boat, and allow the sale of quotas, in this way. Other EU governments have other ways of enforcing (or in some cases failing to enforce) the Common Fisheries Policy.

There are quota-hoppers in other EU countries, a few dozen in Ireland, some in France and Denmark. But the greatest concentration is in Britain.

Spanish and Dutch "plunderers" bought their share of the British quota in good faith, exploiting, according to your viewpoint, EU single market law, the British Government's belief that everything has a price, or a loophole in the Common Fisheries Policy. They now, reasonably enough, claim that they have an inalienable right to carry on fishing.

EU officials say that there are several ways in which Britain could make life difficult for quota-hoppers and stay within EU law. Britain could, for instance, insist that all British fishing boats must land a proportion of their annual catch (say, 30 per cent) for sale or processing at a British port. Until now, the Government has declined to do this. Why? Because many Scottish boats, in particular, like to sell their catches directly to Spain or France, where prices for some species are much higher.

Alternatively, EU officials say, the Government could introduce a law insisting that the crews of "British" fishing boats be covered by British social security and health insurance. This would drill several holes below the waterline of the economics of quota-hopping.

The Government has been reluctant to follow this up. Why? Because it would impose a new burden of regulation on British fishermen, as well as quota-hoppers. Many British fishing crews, who operate on a casual basis, would have to come fully into the social security system.

And so it goes on.

Is a solution possible? With good will, yes. But little good will exists between Britain and the EU at present. The Government appears to be changing its mind about introducing a British-boats-must-sell-some-fish-in-Britain rule. But it says that the rule should be enshrined in the EU constitution as part of the reforms of the treaties now under discussion.

This is silly, say Brussels officials. Such a law could be introduced in Britain within existing EU rules – as long as it applied to all boats, without discrimination. No treaty change is needed.

The suspicion is that the Government is no longer in the fish market for the kind of practical solutions that might help British fishermen. It is locked in a self-consciously Euro-sceptic posture, pandering to Euro-sceptic press and Tory backbenchers. The Government is right to fight for the interests of British fishermen. But, in this dispute, it has long since overfished its quota of red herring.

SN Who's giving away free Trivial Pursuit cards with special tape packs while stocks last?

jo brand's week

Jeremy Irons has threatened to leave the country if no distributor is found for the version of *Lolita* in which he stars. The problem with making threats like these is that they sound rather petulant. I'm sure if I threatened to leave the country, very few people would give a toss apart from family and a few friends and maybe the local newsagent where I buy my cigarettes. You eventually learn that however important you think you might be, nobody is indispensable. With that attitude, perhaps Mr Irons might like to consider the possibility of threatening to stay here instead. That may well piss more people off.

Tony Blair's musical taste has been much in evidence in the past few weeks following his appearance on *Desert Island Discs* and he now pops up in the Christmas issue of *New Musical Express* with his 10 top singles of the year. I have often thought that one of the drawbacks of having children is being forced to listen to their unformed musical tastes, particularly when they are under the age of 12. Obviously, Mr Blair is no exception, which goes some way to explaining why his family has wasted time discussing their favourite Spice Girl, a debate about as useful as judging politicians on their hairstyles.

Joe Public would be forgiven for thinking that almost everyone in public life is corrupt in some way, big or small. This week, Tory Whips have been accused of cheating the opposition over three votes and the ex-chief executive of English Heritage has been criticised for running up hundreds of pounds of expenses on a corporate charge card and getting his employer to pay him four grand for his old furniture. Maybe I should have done that when I worked in the NHS. They do seem to be short, particularly of beds. Meanwhile, in Germany, a seemingly well respected politician, loved by the public for her integrity, has allegedly been using armed forces planes to visit her daughter in Switzerland. Hardly nicking a couple of Biros from work, is it? It is much easier to stomach this type of behaviour from people who are just about scraping a living together. Perhaps the Government's money might be better used weeding out their own charlatans, rather than setting up hotlines for people to grass up their neighbours who are only taking a leaf out of the book of their "elders and betters".

I have won an award this week, which I am being made to feel I should shut my ashtray mouth about. Forest, an organisation that supports people's right to smoke, has given me an award for "sticking steadfastly" to my right to smoke. Immediately, a letter appeared in this august publication condemning *The Independent*, because I have a fag in my hand in the above photo. Firstly, the wealth of anti-smoking stuff far outweighs anything I might be able to do with that tiny little tube of delight in my hand. Secondly, perhaps I should just point out that in a recent survey of role models for young women, I came second only to Margaret Thatcher in my unsuitability as a role model for aforementioned ladies. Thirdly, I am sick to death of this American-style assault on smokers and I shall continue to smoke as much as possible, particularly in places where it will irritate po-faced health obsessives.

We learn this week that laughing is good for us. Phew! It's about time something pleasurable was good for us. It appears that if you drink more you laugh more, too. However, research psychologist Geoff Lowe says this isn't *carte blanche* for us to all rush out and get blasted. Spoilsport. Might do it anyway.

When is Alzheimer's not Alzheimer's? Tricky question it would seem and certainly not one you could ask someone with Alzheimer's, because the thought processes of people with this terrible illness are not organised enough. However, an Alzheimer's-type illness was diagnosed in the case of Ernest Saunders, he of the Guinness fraud fame, who has now made a remarkable recovery and has been raking in the dosh ever since he got off a longer prison sentence. The European Court of Human Rights has decided that Mr S has been unfairly treated and he himself has been indignant when questioned about the nature of his illness. The point I'd like to make is that there are so many contradictory approaches in psychiatry that you could get a psychiatrist to say almost anything you wanted them to. Mr Saunders may well be indignant. So are we. To us it looks as if he got off a long stretch. It's also tragic for all those people who, of course, don't recover from Alzheimer's, because it's incurable.

هكذا من الأصل

grub street

Politicians are made of the same clay as us; it's just that they almost always get found out

david aaronovitch

How many of your stories are really true? If you wrote down your 10 most frequently used anecdotes (my funny pranks, my first condom, the time I met the Queen, etc), and showed them to family and friends, would they be recognised as the unvarnished truth?

Stories get bigger with the telling, especially when recounted by people with imagination. They are embroidered with elaborate curlicues and populated with more interesting characters. And not just for the benefit of the listener, either. Pretty soon, they pass into one's own internal mythology – an irretrievably entangled mass of the real and the magical which is very unlikely ever to be challenged.

Unless, that is, you are a politician. We have come to the point in the electoral cycle when Des O'Connor's researchers telephone Tony Blair's office and invite him to submit himself to one of Des's rigorous policy examinations, sandwiched between a ventriloquist and Boyzone.

This is also the season for the three party leaders to be quizzed by the readers of *Good Housekeeping* (p54, just before "planning the perfect party" – so John Major should read on).

As a consequence of these appearances, we have learned two things this week, only to have them contested. The first (vouchsafed to Mr O'Connor) was the great Blair stowaway story, in which the adolescent Tone skips the train about to carry him back to his stuffy public school and attempts to fly off in a plane from Newcastle airport bound – he thinks – for the Bahamas.

No sooner had the show been recorded than the delighted Desniks circulated the world with a press release; the *Daily Mail* delved deep and discovered that there were no planes flying from Newcastle to the Bahamas in that decade (or, indeed, any other), and that Jersey was the most exotic destination on offer. Even a Scots public schoolboy of the late 1960s would have had difficulty in confusing the two. Er, perhaps.

Conservative Central office were said to be "cock-a-hoop" about this Blair gaffe, until the second discovery of the week was also thrown into doubt.

This was Mr Major's revelation that he calls his wife Norma his "little grub". Taxed with this while visiting Northern Ireland, she said "we don't have nicknames for each other. What rubbish!"

We do not yet know whether Labour is "cock-a-hoop" at Mrs Major's repudiation of her husband, but it's quite probable that they are. (Incidentally, also in *Good Housekeeping*, Paddy Ashdown is revealed as having locked his kindergarten teacher in a cupboard. So far, she has not contradicted him. But then, knowing Mr Ashdown, she's probably still there).

Two things should concern us here. The first is the light these stories shed on our leaders. Did T. Blair say "Bahamas" because he thought it sounded more dare-devil (ie, he's a dissembler), or because – long ago – that is what entered his own mythology (ie, he's like the rest of us)?

Do John and Norma disagree about little grub because she's appalled by the nickname and is fibbing (incidentally, what nickname does she give him? Tiger, perhaps?) or – intriguingly – he has confused her with someone else (a previous girlfriend, possibly)?

I think that we ought to conclude that our political leaders are made of much the same clay as us; it's just that they almost always get found out. But should we also be worried that political discourse in this country is being debased by this concentration on trivia?

Do we agree with yesterday's *Times* editorial which argued – with the pomposity for which that publication is famed – "it would be desirable if politicians refrained from telling the voters so much about the journeys they have made in the past and so little about where they propose to take the country in the future"? This is the same publication that (on page 2) has an entire article devoted to the Bahamas/Little Grub story.

Maybe we should. Perhaps it would be best for politicians on Des O'Connor's show to reprove their genial host for his interest in things personal, reminding him that what viewers really care about is Labour's training policies. It might even keep the pop stars away from politics.

Losing the plot at the National Theatre

by Julian Mitchell

Art, a new play by the French writer Yasmina Reza, is packing them in at the Wyndham's ... indeed it's standing room only for this old-fashioned West End comedy about a Parisian dermatologist who buys a Minimalist white picture which upsets his relationships with his two best friends.

The three men are played by Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay and Ken Stott. The play is about theatre, not art, though Minimalism comes in for the expected middlebrow bashing.

Perhaps the scene the audience enjoys most comes right at the beginning. Finney, as the representative of bluff common sense, struggles not to say what he thinks of someone who's just spent 200,000 francs on a white painting – and fails. He has the audience wholly with him. It says a lot for Courtenay, the dermatologist, that he is able to bring the audience round, if not to his side, at least to thinking of him as something more than a mere sucker. But then the whole point of this sort of entertainment is to watch actors exercise their craft. Stott has the best speech, and delivers it superbly. In the old days we would have called *Art* a feast of good acting.

I found myself thinking: what if the producers had been bolder, and had Finney playing Paul Johnson? The British audience would have enjoyed that, surely, even if it left the tourists puzzled. Stott, the intermediary figure who just wants the others to be nice to each other, could be one of the Sunday paper fence-sitters, too scared to say what he really thinks (always supposing he ever dares think at all). And Courtenay could be a friend of the Tate, who once had dinner with Doris Saatchi, and is anxious not to be left behind.

But that would be another play, which might make the audience think about itself and its attitudes to art. In any case, the current London art scene is almost beyond satire. And I cannot imagine that any such play would make it to the stage of the National's Olivier theatre. One part of the British arts establishment would never dream of upsetting another. The "Royal" National Theatre, which wanted in its early days to put on a play attacking Churchill, has become a staid, respectable museum, devoted to reverent revivals.

It is a dreadful disappointment to those who supported its creation hoping for boldness, danger, innovation. Instead, it is safe, commercial, star-studded – exactly like the West End producers' theatre of Binkie Beaumont to which it was supposed to be the alternative.

Guys 'n' Dolls, the Broadway musical, is the National's latest offering. Jolly Jack Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* is an earlier example, precisely the sort of popular play people agitated against in the Fifties and Sixties when the National was seen as our only hope for a serious theatre. Repertory theatres have been doing it for years. So why should the National decide to revive it in the Nineties? Because the National is run by and for directors and designers.

'Guys 'n' Dolls', the National's latest musical offering, is yet another revival and out of keeping with the theatre's original brief to stage new work

An Inspector Calls is an example of how our subsidised theatre, instead of showing the way forward, has gone back a hundred years to spectacle and superficiality. It was against such silliness that Granville-Barker and Shaw produced their seasons at the Royal Court from 1904-1907. They wanted to make the theatre a place an intelligent person would at least not be ashamed to be seen in. Famously, the Royal Court is now the home of the English Stage Company, founded by George Devine in 1956 as a writers' theatre, very much with Granville-Barker and Shaw in mind.

And who is the new head of the English Stage Company? Why, the director of *An Inspector Calls*. And did he celebrate his appointment with a wonderful new play? No, he revived Arnold Wesker's *The Kitchen*, removing most of the theatre's seats in order to create a highly realistic restaurant kitchen.

It was a statement. Ours is a visual culture, it said; audiences reared on TV have to have naturalistic sets and everything made simple. And the audience duly oohed and aahed. Unkind people say that Stephen Daldry's ideal is a theatre so full of set that there's no room for an audience at all. They can only stand outside and watch the flats going in and out of the fly-tower.

A theatre in which design is king is no sort of theatre to me. In *John Gabriel Borkman*, another recent hit at the National, the designer wanted to emphasise the coldness of the house (not just psychologically — it's Norway, and snowing outside) by siting the stove upstage centre. Fine. But he also wanted such a steep rake that the doors to Mrs Borkman's drawing room, in order to be practical, let in a deadly pneumonic draught. Did the director query this absurdity? Clearly not – and he was Richard Eyre, Artistic Director of the National. This may seem a trivial example, but it's symptomatic of a deep disorder in the theatre's priorities.

John Gabriel Borkman is stuffed with stars, just like a Binkie Beaumont production. Directors and designers were highly regarded then, of course – Cecil Beaton more than most, though modern designers would shudder at his sets.

But at least Binkie did put on new plays; it wasn't all revivals. At the director-led National, the play's not the thing, it's the interpretation.

Directors are like art dealers; they prefer an old, established artist to a new one. Critics feel the same. You don't know where you are with the new; you have to show your hand, you may make a fool of yourself. And with a new play, it's the play, not the director, which attracts attention. But a new *Hamlet*, a new *Cherry Orchard*, a new *Hedda Gabler*, above all a new *Death of a Salesman* – there a director can show his wares.

Or he may like to have a go at one of those ridiculous old melodramas by Hugo or Schiller – shove in some stars and see if he can't wreak a little magic. (No, he can't, actually.) Thus we have revival after revival after revival, but scarcely ever a new play.

When the National started, the Cottesloe, we were told, was to be for new work – and for a time it was. Now, the National relegates new plays to its studio, where they are "workshopped" for weeks, with a director and actors, then disappear. This is as though critics were allowed into an artist's studio to repaint the canvases, then decide whether they're worth a show.

Just occasionally a new play is allowed on to the public stage, but usually only if it's by one of two or three very well-known favourite National writers. Sorry, but things were in fact better before the National was born.

It's proved not only a conservative but also a highly destructive institution, sucking the audience for serious theatre away from the West End, to which it will probably never go back. For one thing the National (except for the Cottesloe) is somewhere you can sit in comfort. The seats in most West End theatres, designed for smaller human beings, are now no longer acceptable to people with normal knees. You can park at the National, whereas getting to the West End is such an effort that people are discouraged before they start. And anyway, where are the stars?

They're at the National, doing revivals. It's only two or three nights a week, not the greatest money, but plenty of time to earn a serious living with voice-overs. The old idea of eight performances a week is anathema to those coddled darlings. And as for going on tour – please! Like all institutions, the National has become a cosy home for its inhabitants.

That's why the arrival of *Art* in a commercial West End is surprisingly cheering. People defend directors' theatre as more intelligent than actors', but I don't see much difference. (A genuine writers' theatre is a mirage). But here an actor – Sean Connery, whose wife saw the play in Paris and got him to buy it – has put it on for three other actors. Warchus, one of our best young directors, has agreed to stage it, even though it isn't a revival. It's as though a group of artists hired their own dealer to put on a show, and sold every picture. That it's not a great play doesn't matter. It's a play – about the only new one in the West End.

The author is a playwright.

We didn't vote for a country called Europe

In Thursday's paper, Kenneth Clarke backed continental co-operation. John Redwood replies

The Chancellor was wrong to say, in his Chatham House lecture last Wednesday, that people thought we were joining a political union in Europe in the 1970s. In 1972, Britain joined the Common Market. No one then told us we were joining the European Union, or that the common market we sought would gradually metamorphose into a country called Europe run from a city called Brussels.

In the White Paper setting out our entry terms, in the parliamentary debates that led up to our accession, and in subsequent ministerial statements of Conservative and Labour governments, we were assured that it was a trading arrangement which would help our economic progress.

In 1975 this was all repeated to secure the consent of the British people in a referendum. Ask those now who voted in 1975, and most will tell you they voted for a common market, nothing more and nothing less. They believed their leaders when they said that the supremacy of Parliament and the common law would remain, save in a few areas relating to a common agricultural and commercial policy.

In the 1980s, Parliament was persuaded that a little more majority voting was needed to complete a proper single market. In the 1990s, we were told that with opt-outs from the Social Chapter and the single currency, Maastricht was a decentralising treaty allowing more deregulation and more national decision-making.

The mood of the British people still favours belonging to a common market, although the numbers who want to pull out altogether are growing. The mood is also distressed by the way the common fisheries policy is damaging our fishing industry, the way the beef ban was placed on British beef sold outside the UK, the way the European court regularly overturns Acts of Parliament, and the way that the legislative machine still produces more directives and regulations, if at a slower rate.

Britain's future is in both Europe and the wider world. It must be a future where we see Europe as a whole – the Europe of Switzerland and Norway, Poland and Hungary, as well as of the present Community. It must be a future where we understand that in 10 years' time, we will do much more trade with Asia than we do today, where our security will still rest upon the American alliance, and where freer trade may well have advanced through Gatt and the World Trade Organisation more rapidly than through the EC.

Euro-file: the Chancellor speaks out

There is no need to be governed by people because you trade with them. The EC accounts for less than half our total services and goods trade, but it is important.

There is no need to join someone else's currency because you do business with them. If currency fluctuations were a sufficient impediment to business, we would have joined the dollar long ago, as so much of our trade is denominated in dollars. Only a world currency would avoid the costs of currency transactions and the fluctuations of the exchanges. Merging a few western European currencies would still leave these economies vulnerable to uncompetitive rates against the dollar or yen.

Britain should stay at the table and lead the debates with our partners. Europe has need of the British view. We are uniquely placed to help modernise Europe: to save Europe from her worst impulses to too much government, to warn her of the damage that higher taxes can do, to remind her that the Asian world is much bigger than the European and growing much faster.

It is British policies in telecoms and energy which have shown the way to the rest: deregulation and competition have powered growth and new technology. It is British policies towards the exchange rate, interest rates and labour markets that have delivered much better levels of employment in the past three years than they enjoy on the Continent.

We should be proud of these successes, humble about our position relative to the jobs success of Asia. Britain should lead the modernisers. We should launch a new agenda for Europe which puts jobs and people first, and bigger government last.

Those of us who are sceptical about Chancellor Kohl's vision of Europe do not want to turn our backs on our continent or withdraw us from the tables of Europe. We are sceptical because we think that Kohl's vision is an outdated one. It will not work. It is already doing damage.

Italy has had to impose a special Euro tax to prepare for the new currency. France has had to undertake unacceptable budget cuts in a hurry instead of going in for longer-term welfare reform against a background of rising prosperity. Germany has had to follow a policy of retrenchment. This is driving a wedge between the peoples of Western Europe and their governments.

Britain's economic interests lie in global trade and modern industries. We should warn that a single currency born of fudge will create havoc. Wrong interest rates and exchange rates will damage parts of the Union in a way which may prove impossible to correct.

We should offer a more positive alternative, based on removing regulation, opening markets, encouraging competition and reducing the size of government. Why is it that amidst all the budget misery, where national governments have to cut Brussels never proposes cutting its own less desirable expenditure? Do we really want those who designed and ran the common fishing policy running a common economic policy as well? It is time to offer something better: a Europe which works.

The writer is Conservative MP for Wokingham.

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Philip Thorpe: Imro chief behind reimbursement plan

Morgan Grenfell agrees to compensate 90,000

Up to 90,000 people will be compensated "at least up to the level of their original investment" following the Deutsche Morgan Grenfell bank scandal, it was announced yesterday.

No one will lose money as a result of recent events, promised the company's asset management division.

Morgan Grenfell Asset Management yesterday announced details of the compensation package it has drawn up following the autumn scandal, when irregularities were discovered in three unit trust investment funds.

Analysts expect a total of around £200m in compensation to be paid out. It will not be known precisely how much each investors will get until calculations have finished. Payments will be made by the end of April, said the company.

The City watchdog Imro, run by Philip Thorpe, has been investigating irregularities in the funds since August.

Dealing in the three funds, with £1.4bn assets under management, was temporarily suspended in early September.

Fund manager Peter Young was later dismissed for gross misconduct, and four directors of the asset management division were dismissed as a result of "management failings" in October.

Anyone who was investing in the funds between 1 August, 1995 and 5 September, 1996 will be considered for compensation, even if they no longer hold those investments, the company said.

People would be compensated for any difference between the actual return they received from their investment and the return provided over the 13-month period by an agreed set of comparable funds, it added.

"In addition, in the event that investments have lost value even after this calculation, Morgan Grenfell will compensate investors up to the value of their original investment."

People will be able to choose between getting a cash payment or receiving new units in the funds, and they will also be paid interest.

The process of calculating compensation will begin immediately and the money is due to go out by the end of April.

How much each person will receive will depend on several factors, including the value of their investment and their buying and selling movements.

"We will not know precisely how much each investor will receive until we have completed the task of calculating individual payments. This is scheduled for the end of April 1997," said the company.

Letters giving details of the arrangements were due to go out last night, and MGAM will write to people again at the end of January with more information, including a record of their transactions.

Robert Smith, its chief executive, said the compensation package provided "a fair and timely solution to a complex issue".

He added: "All investors will be compensated at least up to the level of their original investment, which means no one will lose money as a result of these recent events."

Daniel Waters, director of monitoring and enforcement at Imro, which finalised the terms with the company, said he was pleased the discussions had been brought to a speedy conclusion.

"It is in the interests of investors that compensation will be paid without undue delay. Imro believes that this agreement is a fair and equitable one which safeguards the interests of investors," he added.

Northern bid outcome hangs in the balance

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The outcome of the £782m hostile takeover bid for Northern Electric by US power generator CalEnergy was said to be "too close to call' as both sides argued late into the evening about the level of acceptances by shareholders, in what has possibly become the most acrimonious takeover battle since Granada versus Forte earlier this year.

In another surprise announcement the Takeover Panel, which polices bids, gave CalEnergy special dispensation not to release the result until at least midnight yesterday. The offer, which had been brought forward by the US predator from 4 January to 20 December, formally closed at 1pm yesterday afternoon and the result was expected at around 5pm.

Sources suggested that after several recounts CalEnergy, which owns almost 30 per cent of Northern shares, spoke for just over 49 per cent of its target, short of the 50 per cent and one share needed to win. Northern shares rose 3.5p to 641p. As tension mounted last night David Sokol, chairman of CalEnergy, was refusing to say why the Takeover Panel had intervened yet again in the battle. However, further allegations of spoiling tactics by Northern's stockbrokers, BZW, were believed to have been made. Mr Sokol is thought to have been furious that several US funds were unable to lodge their acceptances in favour of CalEnergy by the deadline.

An anxious CalEnergy spokesman said: "It's very, very close and it's just too sensitive to say anything at the moment. We'll be making an announcement as soon as we can." He did not rule out the possibility that the announcement of the final outcome could slip well beyond midnight.

The Nebraska-based group, which is offering Northern investors 650p a share, had previously gained acceptances from 4 per cent of big City shareholders.

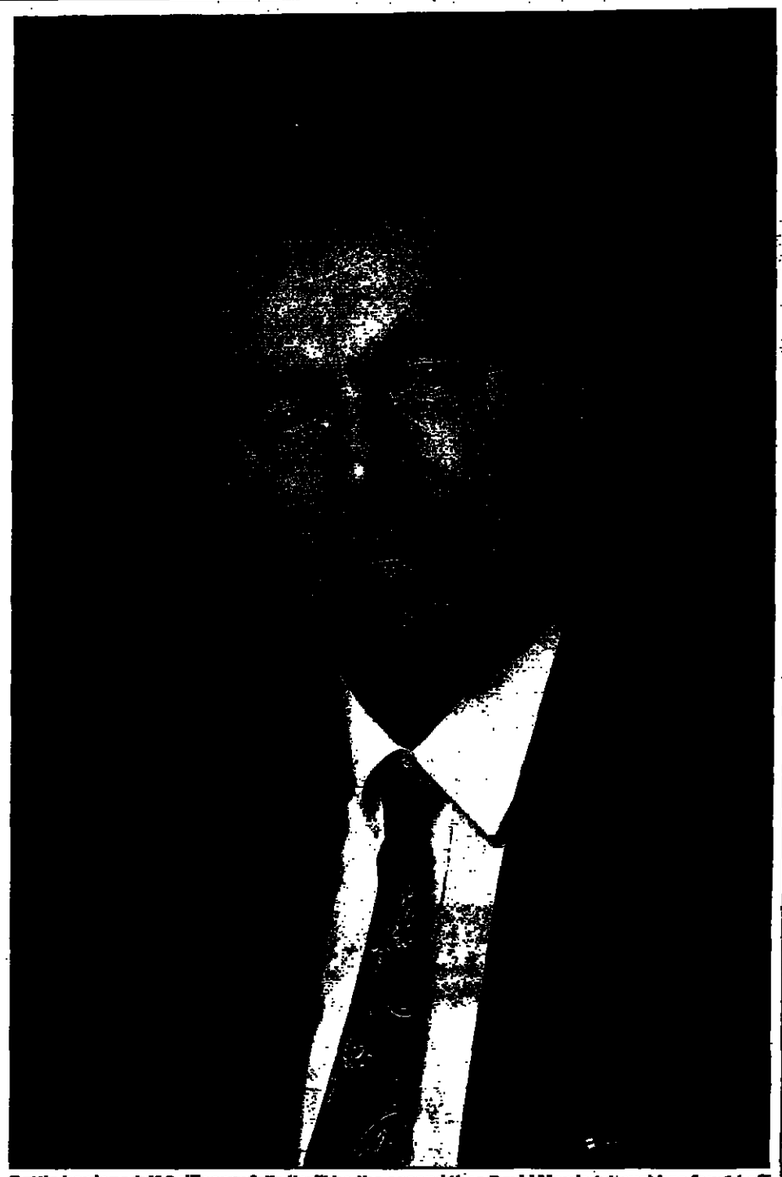
However Standard Life, the insurance group which holds a 3 per cent stake in Northern, was thought to have accepted the offer, giving the US side a big boost.

CalEnergy had always insisted the result would be close, but Northern's fortunes were boosted in the last days of the bid as three of its biggest shareholders backed the existing management, led by battle-hardened David Morris, the chairman.

The Newcastle-based regional power supplier was supported by Prudential, its biggest investor which traditionally backs the management of utility companies exposed to hostile bids. The Prudential had an 11.35 per cent stake in Northern and argued the 650p-a-share all-cash offer was too cheap. Foreign & Colonial and M&G also backed the company, giving the company just over 15 per cent.

Northern has already stirred up controversy this week when BZW and its advisers, Schroders, bought 2.3 per cent of the company. CalEnergy made furious complaints to the Takeover Panel claiming the two companies were effectively indemnified against any losses on the shares because of the fees they are likely to earn from the bid campaign, but the Panel rejected the argument.

In addition, Northern's vociferous army of some 100,000 small investors, who together own around 17 per cent of the company, are also likely to stay loyal or not to respond to the offer at all. Some other investment funds were also staying on the sidelines last night. One fund manager, who did not want to be named, said: "We have a policy of only accepting an offer if it's agreed." If CalEnergy fails, it will be the second time Mr Morris has fought off a hostile attack. His earlier success was the "scorched earth" defence of the £1.2bn bid Trafalgar House bid in 1994. By Febuary 1995 Mr Morris had stunned investors with a £560m package of financial incentives worth a total of more than 500p a share, should they reject the offer.



Battle hardened: If CalEnergy fails it will be the second time David Morris (above) has fought off a hostile attack. His earlier success was the defence of the £1.2bn Trafalgar House bid in 1994

Newman Tonks lashes out at the big sellers

Patrick Tooher

Newman Tonks, the Birmingham-based door knobs, locks and handles group, yesterday attacked the decision of its biggest shareholder to immediately back the hostile £196m offer made earlier this week from FKI, the acquisitive engineering group.

M&G, Newman Tonks' biggest shareholder with an 11.2 per cent stake, irrevocably accepted FKI's offer on the day the bid was launched while Britannic Assurance, another institutional investor, also pledged its 2.2 per cent stake.

The move was unusual because M&G, which said Newman Tonks had "demonstrably underperformed", tends to back incumbent management.

But in his first response, Geoff Gahan, Newman Tonks' chief executive, queried the fund manager's decision: "I find their behaviour quite strange. Why didn't they sell their stake when the share price was higher earlier this year? They have never forgiven us for realigning [cutting] the dividend four years ago."

Mr Gahan was speaking after Newman Tonks announced the sale of its 33 per cent minority interest in Tesa, its Spanish security products manufacturer to Williams, the diversified industrial group, for £27m. The deal, which is subject to shareholders' approval unless FKI's offer lapses, reduces Newman Tonks' gearing to about 10 per cent.

"We are deploying financial resources away from areas not considered hard core and concentrating on controlling interests in businesses with potential for strong growth in international markets," Mr Gahan said. But he declined to say whether other deals were in the pipeline as part of Newman Tonks' bid defence. Last night FKI posted its offer document to Newman Tonks' shareholders, a move that sets the 60-day bid timetable clock ticking.

FKI urged shareholders to "exit a business with a dismal track record at a significant premium" and to "participate in a business with a strong management team and a proven track record".

Halifax-based FKI is offering a mixture of cash and shares worth 150p, or £196m, and a 140p cash alternative. FKI says it is offering at least 20 times the consensus forecast earnings for Newman Tonks this year.

The offer is being funded by a fully underwritten conditional rights issue of two new FKI shares for every 13 existing shares held at 175p to raise £152m. The rest of the deal will be funded from internal resources, taking FKI's gearing up from more than 60 per cent to 80 per cent.

FKI has already spent £260m on acquisitions this year, but Newman Tonks is its first hostile takeover. In his letter to shareholders, Jeff Whalley, FKI's chairman, said he had approached Newman Tonks' board with a view to making a recommended offer. "Regrettably, we were not able to establish a meaningful dialogue, and 16 December Newman Tonks issued an announcement of our approach," he wrote.

BT loses case against Oftel

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Telecom was defeated yesterday in its High Court challenge to controversial fair trading powers planned by Don Cruickshank, the industry regulator.

The ruling, which was warmly welcomed by rival telephone operators, means from the new year that Oftel, Mr Cruickshank's watchdog body, will be able to intervene to ban any action by BT which he believes could thwart competition. BT had claimed Mr Cruickshank was acting unlawfully by elevating himself judge and jury over the company's affairs with no right of appeal.

The ruling, which has widespread implications for UK competition law, will now be extended by Oftel to other telecommunications operators and will also be applied to BSkyB as it rolls out its digital satellite television service.

Simon Holmes, a leading competition lawyer with City firm SJ Berwin explained: "It is another step towards a more competition-orientated regime and another step away from a system which is purely focused on specific regulation. It's a trend which we are anticipating for other regulated industries as competition takes hold."

Pointing to the transformation in the telecommunications industry since Oftel was created at the time of BT's privatisation in 1984, Lord Justice Phillips and Mr Justice Hooper agreed the system of regulation should also be allowed to evolve. However, they admitted that the new licence condition, which mirrors European law, was a "novelty".

Ironically, BT also lost on what the judges said was its strongest argument, that Oftel had unlawfully removed the right of appeal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, because the company had already consented to the new powers. The court challenge was to test their legal validity.

Chancellor claims credit for economic cheer

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Kenneth Clarke claimed the credit for Christmas good cheer on the economy, with new figures yesterday showing the fastest growth in living standards since 1989 and a healthy balance of payments.

"The British economy will enter the new year in the best shape for a generation. I will stick to policies that will enable us to keep it up," the Chancellor said.

The Prime Minister, John Major, made plain the Government's hopes that the economy will give it an electoral boost. "Britain's success is too valuable, too important to all of us to be put at risk," he said in a speech last night.

The stock market celebrated the latest good news, following a record drop in unemployment and a glowing report from the OECD earlier this week, by setting a record yesterday.

The FTSE 100 index climbed 26 points to a closing record 4,077.6, after bobbing above 4,100 in afternoon trading.

It was partly boosted by gains on Wall Street. The Dow Jones index was 24 points higher at 6,497.86 by late morning. This followed a 127-point rise on Thursday, the biggest one-day jump in US share prices since 1987.

However, UK consumer confidence has fallen this month from November's record level, despite the recent run of good news on the economic front. People have become gloomier about both the general economic situation and their personal finances according to a survey carried out for the European Commission. It also showed that expectations of future inflation have increased. The increase in GDP in the third quarter was smaller than previously estimated, official statisticians said yesterday, but this was due to upward revisions to the level of output in the second quarter. GDP grew 0.7 per cent during the third quarter, or 2.4 per cent year-on-year. Growth in the second quarter was revised up to 0.6 per cent, or 2.3 per cent year-on-year.

Investment spending fell during the quarter, dominated by a 7.3 per cent drop in capital expenditure by the privatised electricity, gas and water companies to the lowest level so far this decade.

Consumer spending made the main contribution to growth, driven by big increases in disposable incomes adjusted for inflation. Thanks to earnings growth and tax cuts, the annual rate of increase in real incomes rose to 4.6 per cent during the July-September quarter, the fastest since early 1989.

Separate figures showed that the balance of payments worsened slightly during the third quarter, showing a tiny deficit of £71m compared with a small surplus of £344m the previous quarter. The dip was due to reduced income from investment.

The balance on "invisible" earnings – services, investment income and transfers – nearly offset the trade deficit, and is likely to set a record.

The invisibles surplus of £8.9bn for the first nine months of 1996 has already beaten last year's record.

Profits sent abroad by companies which have invested in the UK reached a record £3.6bn in the third quarter, but remained only half the near-record £7.1bn earned on UK investment overseas.

WBA's goal is £7.5m AIM flotation

Patrick Tooher

West Bromwich Albion yesterday became the latest football club to sign up for a stock market flotation by announcing plans to join the junior Alternative Investment Market in the new year with a £7.5m price tag.

The news came as Sunderland of the Premier League revealed its public offer had been oversubscribed 2.7 times, providing further evidence of investors' appetite for shares in football clubs. Dealings in Sunderland shares are due to begin on Christmas Eve.

West Brom's flotation involves the admission of 73,265 ordinary shares of £10 each. In the 13 months to June, West Brom made a pre-tax profit of £171,000 on a turnover of £5.43m compared with a loss of £489,000 in the year to May 1995.

The club, nicknamed the Baggies, will have the added satisfaction of beating arch-rivals Birmingham City to a stock market quotation as dealings in its shares are due to begin on 3 January.

Earlier this week, first division rivals Sheffield United became a public company via a reverse takeover of Conrad, a quoted leisure group, while Newcastle United of the Premier League confirmed plans to seek a full listing in the spring.

Profit warning by Swiss bank

CS Holding yesterday added its name to the lengthening list of Swiss banks that are making profit warnings. The bank, which also owns CS First Boston, expects to make a loss of around SFr2.1bn (£943m) for this year.

The bank is making SFr5.1bn of provisions to cover bad loans, as the domestic economy continues to suffer from six years of recession. Standard & Poor's yesterday acted on the news, lowering the bank's long term credit rating from "AA+" to "AA".

"It's a massive charge, but it was to be expected, given what's happened at the other Swiss banks," said Thomas Kalbermatten, an analyst at UBS. Last month Union Bank of Switzerland said it would make a record SFr0.5bn loss after announcing SFr3bn of provisions

CS also plans to divest its 44.9 per cent holding in Electrowatt, an energy company, to a consortium made up of Bayernwerk, Badenwerk and Energieversorgung Schwagen, three German energy companies, and Nordostscheweizerische Kraftwerke, a Swiss utility. The disposal will result in a profit of around SFr1bn.

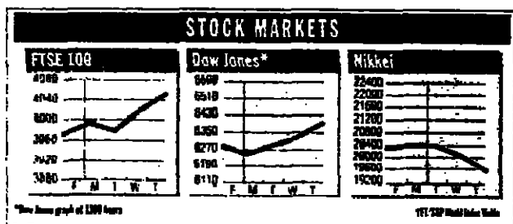
CS said it had taken a new approach to making provisions for bad debts. Instead of using a calculation based on defaults which have actually taken place, it uses an estimation of expected losses.

The charge for provisions comprises several elements. CS is setting aside SFr630m for credit risk while it makes the transition to the new methodology. It is also setting aside a fluctuation reserve of SFr2.0bn. Approximately SFr450m of this will come from the bank's reserve for general bank risks and SFr1.55bn will be charged to the profit and loss account.

A further extraordinary provision of SFr600m will be taken to cover Vertiga, its subsidiary set up to hold high-risk credit provisions.

In total, Sfr450m will be set aside for extraordinary depreciation.

STOCK MARKETS

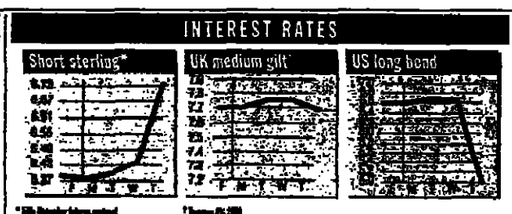


Indices

Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	4051.30	+33.10	+0.8	4073.10	3632.30	3.93
FTSE 250	4406.80	+26.30	+0.6	4568.60	4015.30	3.59
FTSE 350	2009.40	+15.40	+0.8	2022.10	1816.60	3.86
FTSE SmlCap	2146.79	+6.23	+0.3	2244.36	1954.06	3.21
FTSE All-Share	1979.85	+14.54	+0.7	1994.54	1791.95	3.81
New York *	6473.64	+126.87	+2.0	6547.79	5032.94	2.09
Tokyo	19570.67	-522.36	-2.6	22666.80	19570.67	0.80†
Hong Kong	12846.56	+80.54	+0.6	13530.95	10204.87	3.23†
Frankfurt	2607.75	-13.00	-0.5	2909.91	2253.36	1.62†

Statistics as of 20 December

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates

Index	1 Month	3 Year
UK	6.03	6.94
US	5.59	5.84
Japan	0.22	0.44
Germany	3.28	3.25

Bond Yields *

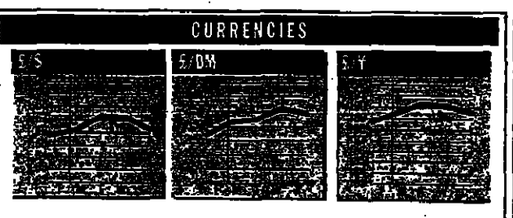
Index	Yesterday	Year Ago	Long Bond	(%) Year Ago
UK	7.62	7.51	7.70	7.66
US	6.40	5.71	6.65	6.07
Japan	2.38	1.68	-	-
Germany	5.84	6.09	6.75	6.67

*Benchmark indices

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change%	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change
Brit Borneo Pets	717.5	46	6.9	Rank Group	416.5	25.5	5.8
Airtours	797.5	50	6.7	GKN	1009.5	35.5	3.4
Brixton Estate	202	8.5	4.4	Fleming Jap Inv	193	6.5	3.3

CURRENCIES



Pound

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
$ (London)	1.6625	-1.00c	1.5391
$ (N York)‡	1.6640	-1.00c	1.5416
DM (London)	2.5936	-0.62pf	2.2165
¥ (London)	189.592	-Y0.513	156.745
£ Index	94.1	-0.3	82.8

Dollar

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£ (London)	0.6015	+0.36	0.6497
£ (N York)‡	0.6011	-0.37	0.6500
DM (London)	1.5601	+0.57pf	1.4402
¥ (London)	114.040	+Y0.375	101.845
$ Index	98.5	+0.3	93.8

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago
Oil Brent $	23.98	+0.06	17.80
Gold $	369.20	+0.15	387.60
Gold £	222.07	+1.76	251.84

	Index	Latest	Yr Ago	Next Figs
RPI	153.9	+2.7pc	149.8	16 Jan
GDP	108.9	+2.3pc	105.7	27 Jan
Base Rates	—	6.00pc	6.75	—

JEREMY WARNER

Northern bid brings back whiff of the Eighties

'Schroders and BZW brought a chunk of Northern Electric with the intention of voting the shares against the bid.... from what I hear it irritated some shareholders so much it finally made them vote in favour'

Maybe it's that stage of the cycle again, but Northern Electric's City advisers, Schroders and BZW, brought back a hint of the 1980s this week in the tactics deployed defending their client against an unwanted bid from CE Electric of the US. The outcome of the bid was still in doubt at the time of going to press last night with various allegations of skulduggery being aired before the Takeover Panel. It almost brings a warm glow to the heart, for it hasn't been like this for years.

With the bidders still short by a whisker of the necessary 50 per cent, the primary allegation was that of "boxing in". That means accelerated settlement of share transactions for those sympathetic to the defence cause, and slow settlement for those hostile to it – generally arbitrageurs. Acceptance by some US arbs had been turned away as too late, it was alleged. Naturally, both allegations are denied.

But what really caught my eye was something that occurred earlier in the week. What Schroders and BZW did was to buy a chunk of Northern Electric with the intention of voting the shares against the bid. Since the exercise was likely to cost the advisers quite a sum of money in the event of their achieving their purpose (frustration of the bid), they had some explaining to do. The Takeover Panel considered the move well into the night and eventually ruled that the advisers were within their rights. It is impossible to tell whether it did the cause any good, but from what I hear it was probably counter-productive, irritating some Northern Electric shareholders so much that it finally tipped the balance and made them vote in favour of the bid. The techniques of the 1980s may be back, but it seems to be that much more difficult to make them work in favour of the client.

Let me explain why. In the bad old days of the City – pre-Guinness – it was par for the course to try to manipulate the market in favour of bidder or defender. Not everyone did it but those who expected to succeed generally dabbled in the black arts to some degree.

So called "fan clubs" would be organised, buying or selling shares in a co-ordinated fashion designed to benefit those they supported. Since in many instances these share purchases would result in a loss, there had to be a quid pro quo. Typically, supporters would be those with a commercial interest in the outcome – suppliers, advisers, contractors. The pay-off would be a strengthening of the relationship (ie more contracts), a dollop of pension fund money to manage, or perhaps a slug of non-existent consultancy work.

These essentially corrupt practices reached their logical end game in the Guinness affair, which both in terms of size and sophistication surpassed anything that had gone before. The niceties of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" were dispensed with in favour of no-nonsense indemnities against loss and straight cash payments for services rendered.

The point about market manipulation, however, is that it doesn't work unless it is conducted in secret. If everyone knows what is going on, if it is disclosed and transparent, then it is also highly likely to be counter-productive.

That is what probably happened in the Northern Electric case. The defenders won control of another 2.3 per cent, but this could easily have been counter-balanced by the number of shareholders they irritated in the process. Neither Schroders nor BZW made any attempt to hide what they were doing, nor given the rules, would they have thought of doing so. All that died with Guinness. About the best they could do in the circumstances was to say they were buying for genuine long-term investment purposes.

In fact they never tried to claim even this, publicly at least, for it is not an easy case to sustain. Everyone was left to draw their own conclusions. Since the advisers so obviously had a commercial interest in the bid failing, the effect was to alienate other shareholders from their cause. Schroders and BZW can afford to take the loss on these share purchases because they will be recompensed in other ways. For a start, they've got a success fee riding on Northern coming out of it with its independence intact. And, of course, their "relationship" with the client will be strengthened. That means more lucrative fees to come. Other shareholders were not in this happy position.

Something similar happened during Enterprise Oil's bid for Lasmo two years ago, although this was not a case of market manipulation as such. In the closing stages of the bid, Enterprise's advisers tried to boost their position by offering preferential terms to a select group of large shareholders. It so infuriated other Lasmo investors that they turned on Enterprise and the bid was lost.

The lesson, then, is that nobody gets any credit for playing silly games. Shareholders want bid battles to be fought on their merits, not on clever little manoeuvres by those with a commercial interest in the outcome.

The Guinness affair never seems to go away, does it? In part that's because Ernest Saunders, the former Guinness chairman, is so determined to keep it in the headlines. His continuing "fight" to clear his name ensures it is never far from the front pages. So what are we to make of this week's judgment from the European Court of Human Rights?

Nobody's going to quarrel too much with the court's ruling that in criminal cases, suspects should not be deprived of their basic right of silence. It is plainly wrong that a murderer or rapist gets better protection under the law than a financial swindler. The trouble is that everyone knows that there was widespread crookery during the Guinness bid for Distillers and that Ernest was one of the ring-leaders.

To be able to say you were unfairly tried is one thing. But it doesn't clear your name. Most people continue to be appalled at the prospect of Mr Saunders' conviction being quashed. As for compensation, there would be rioting at the doors of Westminster if it were ever paid.

Mr Saunders is right to claim he was treated in an oppressive manner but I suspect that an opinion poll on the matter would confirm that most people think he thoroughly deserved it.

Which brings us back to the question of whether it is possible for the authorities to get convictions in cases like this if defendants cannot be required to give evidence against themselves. Lord Roskill, the judge whose recommendations led to the formation of the Serious Fraud Office, believed this to be the only way of dealing with the complex and sometimes impenetrable nature of financial crime. He's probably right. So do we just give up and make these things a purely civil matter? I think not, for that would only encourage the view that there is one law for the rich and an altogether different one for the poor.

Stock Exchange chief in early exit

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

The Stock Exchange yesterday lost one of its most senior executives with the resignation of Giles Vardey, a £240,000-a-year director who lost out in the competition earlier this year to take over the top job at the Exchange.

Mr Vardey said he planned to return to the securities industry from where the Exchange recruited him in 1992. He is to leave next March.

In the spring he was widely tipped as the likeliest internal candidate for the chief executive's job after Michael Lawrence was forced out because of disagreements with the board over the new computerised order book trading system.

But the Exchange board decided not to consider internal candidates, and Gavin Casey was brought in from Merrill Lynch as chief executive in August.

In the stock market, there was no suggestion of anything other than an amicable parting with Mr Casey, in stark contrast to the blazing rows that led to the departure of Mr Lawrence.

But Mr Vardey is nevertheless likely to be entitled to a pay-off. According to the annual report all the Exchange's executive directors are on one-year rolling contracts, and he is to leave just over three months after resigning.

The Exchange said: "There are no payments being made to Mr Vardey other than those to which he is contractually entitled under his contract of employment."

Observers believe Mr Vardey is leaving because he helped reorganise himself out of a senior job at the Exchange, which is slimming down and concentrating on its core activities.

This has left less scope for a board which – with Mr Vardey – comprises four full-time executive directors and a chief executive.

The Exchange confirmed that Mr Vardey is not being replaced, and it is expected that his departure will lead to further reorganisation.

He is the Exchange's highest paid executive after Mr Lawrence, earning a salary of £170,000 last year, a performance bonus of £56,000 and benefits of more than £13,000.

Mr Vardey said he had always intended to leave the Stock Exchange after four or five years. He was returning to the securities industry because "that is where I came from, that is the business I know".

Mr Vardey was best known recently for pushing through the new computerised order-driven trading system, which is to be inaugurated next October.

However, the main technical and regulatory elements of the system have now been agreed and by the time Mr Vardey leaves in March it is expected to be in the trial stage.

He was also involved in the Exchange's move from a fortnightly account to rolling settlement and the introduction of the AIM market for small firms.

Mr Vardey's marketing of the Exchange abroad led to a memorandum of understanding with China, and the first Chinese share was listed on the Exchange this week.

Giles Vardey: involved at the Stock Exchange in the introduction of the AIM market for small firms

Fortis to pay out £850m for bank

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

MeesPierson, the world's oldest merchant bank, was bought yesterday for 2.5bn guilders (£850m) by Fortis, the Belgian and Dutch-owned insurance and banking group.

Founded in 1720 in Rotterdam as Mees and Zoonen, MeesPierson is being sold by the giant Dutch bank ABN Amro, which owns Hoare Govett, the London securities house.

Hoare Govett is not affected by the deal, which represents one of the largest acquisitions in the history of the Netherlands. The release of capital tied up in the MeesPierson business frees ABN Amro to concentrate on expansion elsewhere.

Earlier this year it offered more than £1bn for Standard Federal Bancorporation, one of the largest savings banks in the US Mid-west.

This was the culmination of a series of acquisitions across the Atlantic, including three others this year, which have confirmed its position as the biggest foreign bank operating in the US.

MeesPierson has less than a tenth of its business in the UK, but is a big operator in the Dutch corporate finance, fund management and private banking markets.

The acquisition will make Fortis one of the three biggest financial services groups in the Benelux countries and the fourth-largest Dutch bank. Total assets under management will be £80bn.

Fortis said the acquisition would make a positive contribution to Fortis' earnings per share from 1997. The group will partially finance the acquisition by a rights issue early next year and the rest will be from bond issues and internal resources.

The two parent companies of the group, Fortis AG of Belgium and Fortis Amev in the Netherlands, will contribute equal amounts in cash.

Dennis Ederzeel, a banking analyst at Delta Lloyd Bank, said: "If you look at recent prices for takeovers, that's not an exaggerated amount." The price includes this year's profits and the goodwill payment is about 500m guilders.

In Brief

• **Tarmac** has been told to repay £19.9m to the Government. In December 1992 Tarmac acquired PSA Projects from the Department of the Environment, but both sides were unable to agree certain elements of the deal and the disputed items were referred to an independent expert in October 1995. Tarmac's legal advisers are reviewing the expert's decision.

• **French industrial production** fell sharply in October for the second month in a row, providing further evidence that the economy was set to end the year on a weak note, official figures showed. Industrial production, excluding energy, dropped 0.8 per cent in October from September. Manufacturing output, which excludes energy, agri-food businesses and construction, fell 1.2 per cent month-on-month.

• **Offer**, the electricity industry regulator, will reduce the Fossil Fuel Levy from 3.7 to 2.2 per cent from 1 April. The new rate should be sufficient to cover renewable energy commitments and the payments due to the non-privatised part of the nuclear industry, it said. Following the flotation of British Energy, the levy in respect of nuclear commitments will cease from 1 April 1998.

• **Premier Farnell** has conditionally agreed to sell Farnell Electronic Services, its volume electronic components distribution business, to Arrow Electronics of the US for $300m (£180m) cash.

• **Ofgas**, the industry regulator, warned that there may be greater interruptions for the larger of British Gas's TransCo customers this winter.

Ofgas said in a statement that British Gas TransCo had suggested that with the construction of new power stations, which burn large amounts of gas, and some delays in planned production, the demand for gas might outstrip supply, leading to increased interruptions for larger customers.

Amec firmly in Europe with £40m Spie buy

Michael Harrison

Amec, the British construction group, yesterday took a big step into Europe by buying control of its French rival, Spie Batignolles, in partnership with a £40m management and employee buyout.

The combined group will be the sixth-largest contractor in Europe with turnover of £4.7bn and 48,000 employees.

Initially, Amec is paying £20m-£23m for a stake of between 40 and 48.6 per cent in Spie with the remainder of the shares acquired by management and employees. But it has an option in six years to take full control by buying out the other shareholders.

Amec and the Spie employees will pay the owners of the business, Schneider, £40m in cash. Spie has also agreed to buy out Schneider's 50 per cent stake in the electrical services business Spie Trindel for £75m.

The deal follows Kvaerner of Norway's unsuccessful bid for Amec and Amec's failure to merge with fellow UK contractor, MacAlpine.

Peter Mason, chief executive of Amec, said: "Europe is the largest construction market in the world and it is beginning to consolidate. In the long term there will only be half-a-dozen contractors left in Europe. If we don't do something we will be left behind and there won't be a UK player in that premier league."

Amec employs 20,000 and with turnover of £2.7bn is a big player in the oil and gas and rail markets and building and civil engineering.

Spie, one of the 10-strong consortium that built the Channel Tunnel, is France's fifth-biggest contractor specialising in electrical and civil engineering construction and pipe laying. It has 28,000 employees and sales of £2bn a year.

In recent years, Spie's trading performance has been affected by a number of problem contracts and its exposure to property development. Last year it made pre-tax profits of £4m and this year Amec said it would be profitable at the trading level.

But the property division, together with liabilities relating to a number of construction contracts and Spie's North American interests are being retained by Schneider. Spie has net cash of Fr1.2bn (£137m).

Amec said the acquisition would give it greater access to European and international markets, particularly France where construction output is forecast to grow by 0.4 per cent in 1997 after several years of decline.

National Express to comply with MMC

National Express yesterday agreed to give undertakings on price and service levels on five coach routes between London and the North after the Monopolies and Mergers Commission ruled that its takeover of the competing rail service, Midland Main Line, was against the public interest, **writes Michael Harrison.**

Accepting the MMC's findings, Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, said that if satisfactory undertakings had not been obtained by 20 March, he would force National Express to comply.

But Mr Lang stopped short of ordering National Express to divest itself of the overlapping coach routes – an option preferred by the director-general of Fair Trading, John Bridgeman.

The five services are between London and Sheffield, Chesterfield, Derby, Nottingham and Leicester where National Express controls 97 per cent of the coach and rail market after being awarded a 10-year franchise to run Midland Main Line in April.

The group will be required to restrict increases in coach fares to the retail price index and maintain the current levels of service unless there is "a significant reduction in passenger numbers".

Ernie Patterson, chief executive of National Express, welcomed Mr Lang's announcement, adding: "The behavioural undertakings sought are broadly in line with those we had previously offered."

The MMC concluded that National Express's takeover of the Midland Main Line from British Rail would reduce competition in the leisure market on the five routes and lead to higher fares for both rail and coach passengers and a lower standard of services.

Around 90 per cent of coach passengers and 40 per cent of rail passengers on the routes are leisure travellers.

Statistics as of 20 December

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling Spot	1 month	3 months	Dollar Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark Spot
US	1.6625	8-6	36-33	1.000	—	—	0.6410
Canada	2.2722	54-49	164-156	1.3668	24-23	75-73	0.8761
Germany	2.5935	69-61	203-193	1.5601	30-28	90-87	1.0000
France	8.7625	217-198	640-608	5.2707	86-81	269-258	3.3785
Italy	2550.0	31-45	103-123	1533.8	28-35	91-101	983.206
Japan	189.59	95-91	281-276	114.04	48-47	149-147	73.1002
ECU	1.3478	21-18	66-61	1.2335	13-14	44-45	0.5197
Belgium	53.465	15-10	42-36	32.160	7-5	20-17	20.6147
Denmark	9.9227	222-177	655-556	5.9685	99-79	298-247	3.8258
Netherlands	2.9112	82-74	240-226	1.7511	39-37	121-115	1.1224
Ireland	1.0056	5-1	16-10	1.6533	6-3	10-6	0.3877
Norway	10.783	160-90	380-270	6.4860	50-25	119-69	4.1576
Spain	218.51	3-13	5-13	131.44	8-12	23-31	84.2505
Sweden	11.402	220-160	690-580	6.8586	41-16	152-101	4.3964
Switzerland	2.2264	85-76	239-226	1.3392	40-37	119-114	0.8584
Australia*	2.0950	10-16	15-25	1.2602	14-16	33-35	0.8078
Hong Kong	12.865	93-52	240-183	7.7385	2-0	2-7	4.9604
Malaysia	4.1973	0-0	0-0	2.5247	27-30	80-85	1.6183
New Zealand*	2.3520	64-71	155-168	1.4147	54-56	97-99	0.9068
Saudi Arabia	6.2352	0-0	0-0	3.7505	1-4	5-9	2.4041
Singapore	2.3260	0-0	0-0	1.3991	24-19	70-65	0.8968

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.6627	0.9998	Nigeria	132.375	79.6000
Austria	18.2522	10.9788	Oman	0.6403	0.3850
Brazil	1.7267	1.0383	Pakistan	66.6529	40.0799
China	13.7987	8.2975	Philippines	43.7702	26.3200
Egypt	5.6550	3.4025	Portugal	261.819	157.485
Finland	7.7494	4.6599	Qatar	6.0513	3.6410
Ghana	2825.40	1700.00	Russia	9229.65	5550.00
Greece	411.726	247.580	South Africa	7.7729	4.6740
India	59.6007	35.8500	Taiwan	45.7358	27.5020
Kuwait	0.4989	0.3000	UAE	6.1084	3.6731

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount: subtract from spot rate
rate quoted low to high are at a premium: add to spot rate
*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.
For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033.
Calls cost 50p per minute (day rate) 45p other times.

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	6.00%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	8.25%	Discount	0.50%
France		Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Intervention	3.15%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.25%	Discount	2.50%
Italy		Prime	4.75%	Spain		Central	3.00%
Discount	7.5%	Discount	5.00%	10-Day Repo	6.25%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
Advances	2.50%	Discount	3.25%	Repo (Ave)	4.10%	Lombard	4.125%

Bond Yields

HSBC Markets Research

Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	7¼%	7.37	7½%	7.86	Netherlands	8¾%	4.75	6%	5.79
US	5⅞%	6.15	6.50%%	6.39	Spain	8.40%	6.20	8.80%	7.05
Japan	5.51%	1.65	3⅛%	2.41	Italy	8.25%	6.88	8¾%	7.60
Australia	9¾%	7.06	10%	7.48	Belgium	5%	4.80	7%	5.98
Germany	8%	4.95	6.25%	5.88	Sweden	13%	5.62	6.5%	6.78
France	5.5%	4.88	6.5%	5.81	ECU OAT	6%	4.90	7%	6.17

Yields calculated on local basis. †new benchmark

Money Market Rates

	O'Night	7 Day	1 Month	3	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5¾ 6½	5⅞ 5¾	5⅞ 6⅛	6⅛ 6¼	6¼ 6⅜	6⅝ 7
Sterling CDs	-	-	6¼	6¼	6⅜	6¾
Local Authority Deps	5¾	5⅞	6⅛	6⅛	6½	6⅞
Discount Market Deps	6¼	6	-	-	-	-
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	5⅞	6¼	-	-
Dollar CDs	-	-	4.87	5.05	5.14	5.32
ECU Linked Dep	-	-	4¼ 4⅛	4¼ 4⅛	4¼ 4⅛	4¼ 4⅛

Tourist Rates

£ Buys		£ Buys		£ Buys	
Australia(Dollars)	2.0530	France(Francs)	8.4725	New Zealand(Dollars)	2.3050
Austria(Schillings)	17.7000	Germany(Marks)	2.5175	Norway(Kroner)	10.5325
Belgium(Francs)	51.8200	Greece(Drachma)	401.2000	Portugal(Escudos)	255.2500
Canada(Dollars)	2.2300	Hong Kong(Dollars)	12.6350	Spain(Pesetas)	211.7500
Cyprus(Pounds)	0.7555	Ireland(Punts)	0.9750	Sweden(Kronor)	11.2425
Denmark(Kroner)	9.8700	Italy(Lira)	2503.0000	Switzerland(Francs)	2.1450
Holland(Guilders)	2.8285	Japan(Yen)	187.5000	Turkey(Lira)	189798.0000
Finland(Markka)	7.8600	Malta(Lira)	0.5850	United States(Dollars)	1.6370

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract		Settlement price	High for day	Low for day	EstConts traded	Open interest
Long Gilt	(Dec 96)	109-27	109-28	109-18	350	3648
German Gvt Bd	(Mar 97)	100.32	100.38	99.84	89868	221435
Italian Bond	(Mar 97)	126.72	126.80	126.24	22383	89181
Japan Gvt Bd	(Mar 97)	126.17	126.17	125.97	981	n/a
3 Mth Sterling	(Mar 97)	93.26	93.31	93.25	21439	100384
	(Jun 97)	93.01	93.04	92.99	12336	88148
3 Mth Euromark	(Mar 97)	96.86	96.89	96.85	37957	209484
	(Jun 97)	96.80	96.83	96.78	26203	187501
3 Mth Eurolira	(Mar 97)	93.59	93.63	93.58	10720	94615
	(Jun 97)	93.97	94.01	93.96	2856	53601
3 Mth Euroyen	(Jun 97)	99.40	99.41	99.41	644	n/a
3 Mth Euroswiss	(Mar 97)	98.09	98.14	98.09	4750	43799
	(Jun 97)	98.03	98.07	98.02	2201	18348
3 Mth ECU	(Mar 97)	95.85	95.86	95.83	1249	9441
	(Jun 97)	95.96	95.97	95.95	221	4639
FTSE 100	(Dec 96)	4050.0	4056.0	4015.0	18982	21875
FTSE 250	(Dec 96)	4391.0	4391.0	4391.0	44	2079

Liffe FTSE Index Option

Settlement price: 4049.00 — closing offer price

Series	3950	4000	4050	4100	Call/Put Total/vols
Dec	100/0	51/1	10/10	0/51	--
Jan	192/22	93/35	59/53	33/78	--
Feb	184/44	128/56	96/77	69/101	--
Mar	181/68	142/81	113/101	86/125	--

Energy

Brent Crude ($/barrel) IPE 5.30pm		*chg Yr ago	Gas oil ($/tonne) IPE	close	*chg	WTI	8pm	Products † ($/tonne) Spot CIF NW Europe	
Feb	23.84	+0.45	Jan	217.75	-1.50	Feb	25.20	Prem.Unleaded	216/220
Mar	23.20	+0.46	Feb	214.25	+0.50	Mar	24.55	Naphtha	217/220
Apr	22.82	+0.38	Mar	207.25	+2.00	Apr	23.90	EC Gasoil	225/226
Vol: 26453		Index: 23.61	Vol:	14754		May	23.30	Heavy Fuel Oil	114/116

*since 5.30pm previous day. Year ago prices average for week. Source: ICIS-London Oil Reports. †6pm prices

Commodity Indices

GSCI Indices

	Base date	+Spot	%chg Day	31 Dec	%chg YTD	Year ago	%chg Yr
Index	1970=100	224.85	+0.51	203.50	+10.49	197.91	+13.61
Agricultural	1970=100	236.03	+0.71	281.75	-16.23	278.24	-15.17
Energy	1983=100	91.99	+0.50	71.31	+28.99	67.88	+35.92
Indust'l Metals	1977=100	168.12	+0.60	193.32	-13.04	194.34	-13.50
Livestock	1970=100	184.72	+0.17	182.71	+1.10	186.91	-1.17
Precious Metals	1973=100	466.77	+0.27	489.86	-4.71	491.84	-5.10

†Close as of 18 Dec 1996

Industrial Metals

London Metal Exchange

$/tonne	Cash	3 mths	Volume	LME Stocks		chg
Aluminium HG	1514-4.5	1545.5-46	50193	943625	-	3550
Aluminium Alloy	1351-3	1375-80	197	74500	-	220
Copper A	2227-8	2132-4	65862	115375	+	2875
Lead	698-700	703-4	9481	122625	+	275
Nickel	6640-50	6740-5	14574	49350	+	436
Tin	5795-9	5840-5	3824	9790	-	10
Zinc	1033.5-34	1057-7.5	21165	516550	-	2025

Settlement Conversion exchange rates: £/$ $/Dm $/¥

Precious Metals

Spink & Son

pm fix /oz	$	£	Coins	$	£		$	£
Platinum	371.75	223.15	Britannia	387	232	Krugrands	364/372	219/224
Palladium	118.00	70.85	Britannia.5 oz	198	119	Sovs	85/95	51/57
Silver spot	485.35	291.65	Britannia.25 oz	101	61	Nobles	367/384	221/231
Gold Bull'n	369.00	222.09	Britannia.10 oz	53	32	Maple Leaf	369/386	222/232

Agricultural

CMS

Cocoa LIFFE	£/tonne	Coffee LIFFE	$/tonne	Barley LIFFE	£/tonne	Potatoes LIFFE	£/tonne	Potatoes ATA	Gld/100kg
Dec	37	Jan	1296	Jan	94.00	Mar	51.30	-	-
Mar	6944	Mar	1234	Mar	95.75	Apr	61.40	Feb	22.90
May	330	May	1196	May	97.00	May	63.60	Apr	11.80
Vol:	8269	Vol:	8086	Vol:	18	Vol:	11	Vol:	46

White Sugar LIFFE	$/tonne	Freight LIFFE	$10/idx pt	Wheat LIFFE	$/tonne	Corn CBOT	Hi-Lo	Cents/bushel Sett
Mar	303.80	Dec	1518	Jan	96.50	Dec	273.00-267.00	269.50
May	303.50	Jan	1440	Mar	98.70	Mar	266.25-263.25	264.25
Aug	305.80	Vol:	119	May	100.60	May	267.75-265.00	266.00
Vol	1283	Index	1523	Vol:	96			

Other Softs

Dec	Maize (No.3)**	$/tonne	127.00	Jan	Soya Oil§	FL/100kg	90.00
Jan	Copra (†)	$/tonne	155.00	Dec	Coconut Oil (†)	$/tonne	800.00
Mar	Cotton (NY)	UScent/lb	76.12	Jan	Sunflower Oil§	$/tonne	512.50
Dec	Wool	Acent/kg	650.00	Jan	Rapeseed Oil§	FL/100kg	93.00
Jan	Rubber*	Mcent/kg	318.50	Dec	Groundnut Oil	$/tonne	875.00

Origin: §Dutch/EC - any origin - †Philippines/Indonesia *Malaysia **N Europe Sources: FT Information/Reuters

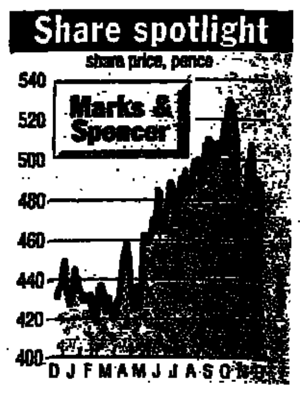
market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100
4077.6 + 26.3
FTSE 250
4448.4 + 41.6
FTSE 350
2023.7 + 14.3
SEAQ VOLUME
944.5m shares,
43,136 bargains
Gilts Index
N/A

Share spotlight

share price, pence



Doubts on the high street dampen Footsie's triumph

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

It was not quite the triumphant day many had expected. True, Footsie stretched to a peak but after New York's heroics a more convincing advance had seemed inevitable. Retailers were largely responsible for confidence ebbing away in late trading.

At the close the index was up 26.3 points at 4,077.6; during the session it touched 4,100. Its previous peak, 4073.1, was achieved two months ago.

Although some of the glory faded the stock market was able to point to three rampant sessions which lifted Footsie almost 100 points.

Supporting shares were also in form with the FTSE 250 index ending up 41.6 at 4,448.4, a three-day gain of 84.4.

Retailers were hit by renewed doubts about the strength of Christmas trading. Cautious trading statements from major **Marks & Spencer** suppliers, **Claremont Garments** and **SR Gent**, added to the anxiety that the festive season, after a bright start, had faltered and hopes it could represent the biggest spending spree since 1988 may be dashed.

Marks led the retreat, falling 11.5p to 472.5p. **Burton** lost 3p to 151.5p and **Next** 7.5p to 544.5p. Boots, Dixons, Great Universal Stores and Sears were others to miss the Christmas party.

Claremont said sales in the Christmas build-up were running below best expectations; Gent, reporting an £11.1m loss, reported sales in line but margins feeling the pinch. Claremont fell 6p to 166.5p but Gent, which is in take over talks, added 2p to 59.5p.

Oils enjoyed some strong gains with **Enterprise Oil** bubbling 22p higher to 636.5p as analysts calculated the asset valuations implicit from the Gulf Canada Resources bid for **Clyde Petroleum**. Clyde edged forward 3p to 119.5p and **Cairn Energy** 5p to 411p.

The giants were in form with **British Petroleum** 11p firmer at 694p and **Shell** 12p at 994p.

Ramco Energy was the star performer, flaring 137.5p to 1,030p. It is to explore in Georgia and is planning an international offering of shares and ADRs to raise up to $115m. **Aminex**, which also has exploration and production interests in the former Soviet Union rose 3p to 65p. It is likely to announce further Russian developments in the new year.

Thames Water, largely on share buy-back hopes, spurted 18.5p to 607.5p. The water utilities are also drawing strength from expectations they will soon be subjected to the same intensive takeover speculation as electricities.

Severn Trent rose 8.5p to 692.5p; **United Utilities** 14p to 607.5p and **Yorkshire** 12.5p to 694p.

GKN, off 17p at 992.5p, remained under the whip of its legal setback in the US and **Railtrack's** exhilarating run came to an abrupt end, falling 5p to 393p following the strictures from its regulator.

Smith & Nephew put on 4.25p to 181.25p following an upbeat statement on the progress of some of its treatments.

British Aerospace climbed above 1,200p for the first time, gaining 24p to 1,209p, and **Rolls-Royce** was the best-performing blue chip, up 9.5p to 254p.

Premier Farnell improved 27.5p to 712.5p following a planned electronic components sale for $300m.

A rash of share tips for 1997 from NatWest Securities produced a round of gains with **Pearson** up 9p at 717.5p and **Standard Chartered** 13p at 711.5p. **Arjo Wiggins Appleton**, the paper group, put on 13.5p to 173.5p as ABN Amro Hoare Govett made positive noises.

Matthew Clark, the cider and wine group, fell under the influence of rumoured profit downgradings rather than takeover speculation, ending 3.5p down at 256.5p.

Memory Corporation, which repairs defective computer chips, continued to express relief at the completion of its £1.36m cash raising exercise, improving 8p to 69.5p. The group placed shares at 45p.

Dalgety, the petfood group which hit a 298p low in October, edged further ahead, gaining 7.5p to 361.5p. Vague takeover talk persists with Nestlé, the Swiss giant, the most popular predatory candidate. UBS support was another factor.

Aromascan advanced 6p to 85p on Mitsubishi bid speculation and **Oxford Biomedica** added another 5p to 70p and is now just 18p from its placing price. At one time the shares were down to 42.5p. **Aquarius**, the bathmats group, traded at 173.5p from its 166p placing.

ET, a financial group, slipped 2p to 145.5p as directors sold 5.7 per cent of the capital, pocketing more than £4m. The sales were made at 140p a share.

Taking Stock

❑ **Emerald Energy, the oil tiddler with high hopes of a Colombian strike, has, as thought, attracted star names to its share register. GFM International has emerged with a 4.76 per cent stake; a fund related to SBC Warburg has 8.95 per cent and a NatWest small companies fund 3.65 per cent. The company raised £7.5m through an institutional placing. The shares are 2.75p.**

❑ **Electronic Retailing Systems, the first NASDAQ company to arrive on AIM, rose 18p to 207.5p following an improved version of its electronic price labels for retailers. In the past six months the shares moved between 143p and 258.5p.**

❑ **Wyndeham Press held at 222.5p. Stockbroker Wise Speke forecast a £3.1m profit jump to £8.2m and says buy.**

Share Price Data: All prices as close 19 December

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.
Other details: r Ex rights x Ex-dividend a Ex all u Unlisted Securities Market s Suspended pp Partly Paid pm Nil Paid Shares. ‡ AIM Stock Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0891 123 333, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 – Real-time	00	Sterling Rates	04	Privatisation Issues	38
UK Stock Market Report	01	Bullion Report	05	Water Shares	39
UK Company News	02	Wall St Report	20	Electricity Shares	40
Foreign Exchange	03	Tokyo Market	21	High Street Banks	41

Anyone with a tone-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of The Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 0891 123 333. For assistance, call the helpline 0171 873 4378 (9.00am - 5.00pm). *Calls cost 50p per minute (day time), and 45p at all other times. Call charges include VAT*

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000
E Midland Elec	2960000	Hanson	2250000	BT	1210000	Abbey National	780000
Sears	2940000	Cookson	1820000	T&N	970000	Allied Domecq	760000
BTR	2530000	British Steel	1530000	British Gas	940000	Rank Group	750000
ASDA Group	2460000	Ladbroke	1400000	National Grid	840000	BAT Inds	710000
Storehouse	2280000	Lloyds TSB	1280000	BP	780000	Barclays	710000

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 4021.3 up 3.1	11.00 4020.3 up 2.1	14.00 4041.0 up 22.8
09.00 4028.2 up 10.0	12.00 4024.7 up 6.8	15.00 4045.3 up 27.1
10.00 4024.9 up 6.7	13.00 4031.5 up 13.3	16.00 4045.8 up 27.6
		Close 4051.3 up 33.1

Share price tables (1996 High, Low, Stock, Price, Chg, Yld, P/E, Index Code), by sector: Alcoholic Beverages; Banks, Merchant; Banks, Retail; Breweries, Pubs & Rest; Building/Construction; Building Materials; Chemicals; Distributors; Diversified Industrials; Electricity; Electronics; Engineering; Engineering Vehicles; Extractive Industries; Food Manufacturers; Gas Distribution; Health Care; Household Goods; Insurance; Internationals; Investment Companies; Investment Trusts; Leisure & Hotels; Life Assurance; Media; Oil Exploration; Oil, Integrated; Other Financial; Pharmaceuticals; Printing & Paper; Property; Retailers, Food; Retailers, General; Support Services; Telecommunications; Textiles & Apparel; Tobaccos; Transport; Water — [illegible]

Rights Issues

Stock	Price	Chg
Allied Colloids	1/2pm	+3
Advent Associates	7 1/2pm	
Adian	1/4pm	
Biocompatibles Intl	340pm	-5

Recent Issues

Stock, Price, Chg — [illegible]

Government Securities

Index-linked; Undated; Shorts; Mediums; Longs (1996 High, Low, Stock, Price, Chg, Red Yld, Index Code) — [illegible]

هكذا من الاصل

هكذا من الاصل

Morgan Grenfell European Growth Trust.

Morgan Grenfell Europa Fund.

Morgan Grenfell European Capital Growth Fund.

Important announcement for investors.

Morgan Grenfell Asset Management Limited and IMRO have agreed a package of compensation for investors in the above funds.

Who is eligible?

Investors will be considered for compensation if they held any of the three funds at any time between 1 August 1995 and 5 September 1996, whether or not they continue to invest in the fund(s).

•

What is the basis for compensation?

Investors will be compensated for any difference between the actual return they received from their Morgan Grenfell investment(s) and the return provided over the above period by an agreed index of comparable funds drawn from appropriate Micropal* data.

In addition, in the event that investments have lost value, even after this calculation, Morgan Grenfell will compensate investors up to the value of their original investment.

•

How will compensation be paid?

Those eligible for compensation will have the option of receiving either new units in the relevant fund(s) or cash.

•

When will compensation be paid?

The process of calculating compensation will begin immediately. Because of the large number of investors in the funds, payments are scheduled to be made at the end of April 1997.

•

Will interest be paid?

Yes. Investors will receive a payment in respect of interest on their compensation from 5 September 1996 or the date on which their holding in the fund(s) was sold, if earlier, until compensation is paid.

How are PEP holders affected?

The compensation package does not affect the tax-free status of PEPs.

•

How much will each investor receive?

This will depend on the timing of each investor's purchase(s) and sale(s) in the fund(s), but every investor will be compensated at least up to the level of their original investment. This means that no one will lose money as a result of recent events at Morgan Grenfell.

We will not know how much each investor will receive until we have completed the task of calculating individual payments. This is scheduled for the end of April 1997.

What should investors do now?

Investors need take no action as there is no requirement to register for compensation. We are unable to give estimates of individual compensation payments.

We have written to all investors in the three affected funds on 20 December and will be writing to them again at the end of January 1997 with a history of their transactions in the fund(s) together with further information on the compensation package.

MORGAN GRENFELL
ASSET MANAGEMENT

Issued by Morgan Grenfell Investment Funds Limited which is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and Morgan Grenfell Unit Trust Managers Limited which is regulated by IMRO and is a member of AUTIF.
Both companies are located at 20 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 1UT. Telephone 0800 282465.

*an independent source of statistics on investment funds

sport

Amateurs promote expansive approach

David Llewellyn on two small clubs' big day in rugby union's Pilkington Cup fifth round

The Reading pack practice their scrummaging for today's home Pilkington Cup tie with Saracens, a big-spending club who are two divisions higher — Photograph: Robert Hallam

This morning a freelance helicopter pilot and a railway police officer will be among the shoal of hopeful amateurs and part-timers preparing for the biggest day of their rugby lives when they will try to topple the big fish in the Pilkington Cup fifth round.

There are just a few small fry left in the competition, swimming against the tide of professional clubs, a tide which generally overwhelms the best efforts of the lesser lights. But that is not to say that Wigton's Grant Lawrence, a former Royal Navy helicopter pilot, and the Reading hooker Scott Perkin, who works for the railway police, will not be trying their damnedest to arrest the progress of Moseley and Saracens respectively.

Both clubs boast an expansive style. Lawrence has scored 14 tries on the wing this season, while 24 Reading players have got on to the scoresheet to date. "At Wigton we play a good running game," Lawrence said. "We have a mobile set of forwards and the backs like running straight, hard and true."

It is no different for Reading. With such a large list of try-scorers theirs is also an expansive game and they promise today will be no different. Mike Tewkesbury, their director of coaching, said: "We believe in getting into the opposition half as quickly as possible, but with the ball in hand. Our policy is to involve all team members in the game and we won't change that."

Although they are at home, Reading's task against the big-spending First Division club, who boast Michael Lynagh and Philippe Sella in their line-up, looks by far the more onerous. Third Division Reading have just two full-time professionals in their squad, compared with Saracens' dozen.

Those two full-timers are fairly impressive though. The scrum-half Andre Bachelet, who has scored four tries, including two in the previous round, and the centre Mark Scharrenberg are US Eagles having each won almost 20 international caps. But while they are paid between £25,000 and £30,000 each, Saracens have acquired their big names for much bigger money. François Pienaar, the former South African captain who joins after Christmas, will reportedly pick up £500,000 in his two and a bit seasons with the north London club.

Wigton have no professionals and Ray Graham is the director of coaching of the lowliest club in the competition, they are currently second in North One, the equivalent of a fifth division. Graham only took up the coaching duties (unpaid of course) at the start of the season, but already their direct, running game has set the north alight.

"It's Ray's coaching that has lifted Wigton," said Lawrence, who is trying to get his commercial flying career off the ground. "If you talk to supporters they will tell you it is a long time since they have seen rugby like this played at Wigton. I am really enjoying it. I know I'll get the ball in a match and I've been averaging almost a try a game."

Graham, 46, who has played in all eight forward positions, believes in giant-killing. He was captain of the Wigton side that felled Sale when Steve Smith and Fran Cotton were around.

Cotton was so angry after that 24-7 preliminary-round defeat that he kicked the changing-room door (the club have since had the mark framed).

Graham's philosophy is simple. "If we kick we lose control," he said. "Anyway our fly-half Tane Manihera can't kick very well." The Maori, signed as an amateur from rugby league side Carlisle Raiders, is certainly not afraid to run the ball from his own 22 according to his team-mates.

There are ambitious plans afoot for Wigton to amalgamate with the Raiders, but having also acquired a former player of theirs, the centre Matt Elliott, who has improved immeasurably since his return from the 13-man code, it looks as if they are well down the line to pool playing resources at least.

Graham is positive about the tie. The two sides last met in the competition in the 1979-80 season, immediately after toppling Sale. On that occasion Wigton lost at home 7-3 – "to a try that wasn't," claims their secretary, Malcolm Sunter

This time Graham points out: "We are better prepared. Moseley are still trying to build their team. We are also on a run having won our last 12 games. Ours is a side that believes in itself."

Down at Reading, Tewkesbury is more cautious. "The days of Cup upsets are going," he said. "There is a vast gulf opening between the First and some of the Second Division clubs and the rest. The professionals can train day in, day out, improving and grooving techniques and ball skills. But we respect Saracens and we feel they are a side we can learn from."

So there you have it. Reading expect to learn from their experience.

Wigton are bent on teaching Moseley a lesson.

Clubs are offered interim payments

The Rugby Football Union yesterday ignored the delay in the English Professional Rugby Union Clubs signing the agreement the two sides have reached and promised nearly £1m to the First and Second Division clubs to help the poorer among them to settle their wage bills.

The payments of £40,000 to each of the 24 clubs, the first installments of the £8m they should share this season, are being made by the RFU on the basis that the agreement that was negotiated on 5 December is signed soon. The Epruc clubs met yesterday, but Kim Deshayes, Epruc's chief executive, said: "Unfortunately because of illness, an important document was not available for us to consider. So, we will reconvene on 7 January in the expectation that we can conclude the deal."

The RFU said that the payments were being made because the complex legal and taxation issues involved were delaying finalising the agreement.

The Scottish Rugby Union has turned down an appeal by Tim Grady, of Edinburgh Wanderers, against an 18-month ban imposed on him last month. Grady was cited following his side's Tennents National League match against Portobello FP on 12 October during which an opponent suffered facial injuries. The incident is the subject of current civil and criminal actions.

Coventry members rejected a takeover bid from Coventry City Football Club by a large majority at an extraordinary general meeting, where the preferred option was to explore the best possible deal with the London property group Leander. Under the Leander proposal, the club would become a plc and the property group would take a controlling interest by buying a million £1 shares.

The referees' dispute which has disrupted this weekend's Welsh League programme could shortly be resolved. Following an emergency meeting of the Welsh Rugby Union general committee, WRU officials and referees' representatives will sit down together to try to settle the contentious issue of match fees which provoked this weekend's strike.

Riders look to topple the Towers

Basketball

RICHARD TAYLOR

The Leicester City Riders coach, Bob Donewald, and his band of Americans have pumped life into the Granby Halls this season, but tonight they are on a hat-trick of home defeats against the Budweiser League champions, London Towers.

Riders' "in your face" style has reaped the worst foul count in the League, averaging 25 per game, and Donewald returns after serving a two-game ban for being ejected from the League Trophy defeat to Chester Jets. But the crowd at Granby have responded and the London coach, Kevin Cadle, is wary of the greeting awaiting his team: "Games at Leicester have always been tough, but now they're getting their fans back with that aggressive home court atmosphere."

Towers, toughened by a run that has taken them into the last 32 of the European Cup, should hardly be psyched out. The Leicester-born Karl Brown, who left London Leopards in the summer to join the Towers, said: "In the long run the European campaign will help. It's hard, but it brings the players' level up."

Whitaker romps to third victory

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY reports from Olympia

John Whitaker continued his irresistible form when he rode the 17-year-old Virtual Village Grannusch yesterday to gain his third victory of the Olympia Show Jumping Championships.

He defeated Bert Romp of the Netherlands, who was finishing runner-up to Whitaker and Grannusch for the fourth time in four weeks. Having jumped his swift round on Burg's Samantha, Romp was far from complacent. "With John behind me I don't count on winning any more," he said. "Grannusch is very fast and John is not the slowest."

Whitaker proved the point when he overtook Romp by 0.11sec, but it was not yet over for the Dutch. Jos Lansink, who was last to go in the jump-off on the grey Bachus, had time in hand when he hit the last fence to leave the British with another victory.

At that point Ireland's Paul Darragh was the only one among a formidable contingent of overseas riders who had won an international competition at the show. Whitaker was contented with the fact the other eight events had gone to home riders. "Olympia brings out the best in us," Whitaker said. "It's the best British show and we pull out all the stops for it. I won't be going to a show next week so there's no worry about saving the horses for the next outing."

Nick Skelton and Virtual Village Zalza, who had won the Vink Christmas Masters so impressively on Thursday night, continued to catch the eye yesterday. First to go in the jump-off, the bright chestnut gelding made his only error going into the final double, and he eventually finished in sixth place.

Skelton has ridden Zalza for just six weeks. The horse was partnered by a Dutch girl, Kyra Swelheim, and Romp remembers seeing him jump in the Netherlands. "He was placed in several grands prix with Kyra, but with Nick he is already a completely different horse," Romp said.

Ben Dunning, 17, won the Speedline Telecom Young Show Jumper of the Year title on his first appearance at Olympia. He rode Miss Party Piece, an eight-year-old mare who represents his main hope for selection at next year's Junior European team.

Results, Sporting Digest, page 23

Lara finds his old form to boost tourists

Cricket

Brian Lara at last rediscovered his best form on the tour of Australia as the West Indies rallied on the second day of their four-day match against Victoria in Wangaratta yesterday.

The tourists were 319 for 5 at stumps in reply to Victoria's first innings total of 354, with Lara's 86 from 70 balls the best batting spell of the day, though his dismissal left West Indies' officials upset.

Lara was given out hit wicket before tea off the bowling of David Saker, but the tourists said he should have been ruled not out because he hit his wicket when he set off for a run rather than when playing the shot. "I hope this is the last piece of bad luck I can have on this tour," Lara said afterwards with admirable diplomacy. His innings featured a 22-ball spell in the middle session when he smashed his way from 43 to 86.

He was particularly harsh on the Victorian leg-spinner Brad Stacey, taking 33 off two of his overs with eight fours and a single. The opener Sherwin Campbell made 80 while Carl Hooper scored 49.

Weak Wigan send for 'Doc'

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

David "Doc" Murray has flown in from Auckland to provide an immediate cure for Wigan's relatively threadbare squad in the Boxing Day match against St Helens.

The 24-year-old Murray will go straight into his new side at full-back for the fixture. "We still have a very small squad by our standards and the arrival of a player of Doc's ability can only increase the competition for places," said the Wigan coach, Graeme West.

Murray – the medical qualification is merely the lingering symptom of a childhood nickname – impressed in two matches against the Great Britain tourists this autumn. "Salford had already made me an offer but when Wigan came in I had no hesitation," he said.

He will play on Boxing Day against a former team-mate at the Auckland Warriors, St Helens' new prop Julian O'Neill. Wigan's two other recent signings, the forwards, Stephen Holgate and Ian Sherratt, will also make their debuts in the same match. The influx of new blood is particularly well timed because Wigan are far from certain to be able to call upon their players on loan to rugby union clubs – Gary Connolly, Jason Robinson, Henry Paul and Va'aiga Tuigamala. The club's football manager, Joe Lydon, said that discussions about the availability of those players would carry on into next week.

Oldham have signed the winger-cum-centre Vince Fawcett, who played last season for the Australian club Parramatta. Fawcett, previously with Leeds and Workington Town, will also make his first appearance for his new club over the holiday season.

Scott Naylor, Salford's new international, and second-row forward Craig Randall have handed the Super League newcomers a double boost by signing new, two-year contracts.

Leeds Rhinos have signed their second player from North Queensland Cowboys in 23-year-old utility back Damian Gibson, a former Australian schoolboy international. He joins his fellow countryman Jamie Mathiou at Headingley.

New England regime puts faith in attack

Hockey

BILL COLWILL

England's first post-Olympic training camp, which ended yesterday at Lilleshall, was described by the England manager, David Whittle, as "a real culture shock."

The new coach, Jon Royce, appointed to take a squad to Karachi in March for an elite, six nations tournament made up of the world champions, Pakistan, the Dutch Olympic champions, Australia, Germany, Korea and England, has concentrated only on attacking formations, a pattern of play foreign to British sides in recent years.

The players have responded well, particularly Bobby Crutchley and Danny Hall, together with a late addition, Teddington's Nick Conway, who until recently was a hockey coach in the United States.

After losing the first of their training games during the week, 3-0 to National League leaders Cannock, England have had useful wins against Barford Tigers 6-2 and Beeston 6-1. Conway leads the way with five goals.

No alternative to specialist penalty-corner striker Calum Giles has been found and it looks as if the Olympic top-scorer's place for the trip is assured.

Although pleased with the week, Whittle accepted that there was a mountain to climb.

This weekend's domestic scene is virtually limited to the second half of the Midland Counties Indoor championship at Kidderminster where Stourport and Barford Tigers have already reached tomorrow's last four. Harborne and Cannock are likely to complete the line-up.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Just like Samson, whose power came from his hair, Vinnie's comes from having the respect of his team-mates. Lose that and lose it all." Wimbledon chairman Sam Hammam on his club captain Vinnie Jones, fined a week's wages for making demeaning remarks about his team-mates in a national newspaper.

"Write us off at your peril." Peter Beardsley, Newcastle player, after his title-chasing team lost 2-1 at lowly Coventry.

"I had to go – I felt like a turkey waiting for Christmas." Frank Clark, who resigned as Nottingham Forest manager.

"I would have preferred to take over a team at the top of the league with no problems off the pitch." Stuart Pearce, Forest captain and caretaker manager.

"We're very conscious that the kids can't get in. The next generation can't get into the stadium. We've been too successful." Newcastle owner Sir John Hall on the club's plans to move.

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE

TODAY

Football

3.0 unless stated

FA CARLSBERG VASE Third round: Hucknall Town v Newcastle Town; Hinckley Athletic v Stamford. **Third-round replays:** Bridgnorth v Spalding; Greenwich Borough v Concord Rangers (1.0).

ICIS LEAGUE Premier Division: Bishop's Stortford v Yeovil; Chertsey v Dagenham & Redbridge; Dulwich v Grays; Enfield v Boreham Wood; Hendon v Carshalton; Heybridge v Bromley; Oxford City v Kingstonian; St Albans v Harrow; Sutton Utd v Staines; Yeading v Hitchin. **First Division:** Abingdon Town v Croydon; Aldershot v Tooting & Mitcham; Barton v Marlow; Billericay v Basingstoke; Bognor Regis v Thame; Chesham v Molesey; Hampton v Worthing; Leyton Pennant v Wokingham; Uxbridge v Maidenhead; Walton & Hersham v Berkhamsted; Whyteleafe v Canvey Island. **Second Division:** Cheshunt v Wivenhoe; Edgware v Banstead; Egham v Wembley; Hemel Hempstead v Barking; Horsham v Bedford; Hungerford v Metropolitan Police; Leatherhead v Windsor & Eton; Leighton v Collier Row & Romford; Tilbury v Dorking; Ware v Bracknell; Witham v Chalfont St Peter. **Third Division:** Braintree v Wealdstone; Camberley v Tring; Clapton v East Thurrock; Epsom & Ewell v Aveley; Harlow v Flackwell Heath; Kingsbury v Lewes; Northwood v Hertford; Southall v Hornchurch.

UNIBOND LEAGUE Premier Division: Bamber Bridge v Witton; Bishop Auckland v Runcorn; Buxton v Lancaster; Colwyn Bay v Emley; Frickley v Knowsley; Gainsborough v Barrow; Guiseley v Chorley; Hyde v Boston Utd; Leek v Accrington Stanley; Winsford v Blyth Spartans. **First Division:** Ashton Utd v Leigh; Droylsden v Stocksbridge. Eastwood Town v Workington; Farsley Celtic v Lincoln Utd; Great Harwood v Gretna; Harrogate Town v Worksop; Radcliffe Borough v Atherton LR; Whitley Bay v Bradford Park Avenue.

DR MARTENS LEAGUE Premier Division: Baldock v Halesowen Town; Cambridge City v Worcester; Chelmsford v Ashford; Cheltenham v Merthyr Tydfil; Dorchester v Burton; Gravesend v Sudbury Town; Gresley Rovers v Hastings; Newport AFC v Atherstone; Nuneaton v Gloucester; Sittingbourne v Crawley. **Midland Division:** Bilston v VS Rugby; Dudley v Grantham; Evesham v Corby; Hinckley Town v Bedworth; Ilkeston v Shepshed; Moor Green v Stourbridge; Paget Rangers v Rothwell; Racing Club Warwick v Solihull Borough; Stafford v Redditch. **Southern Division:** Buckingham Town v Weymouth; Cirencester v Dartford; Clevedon v Fleet; Erith & Belvedere v Cinderford; Fareham v Weston-super-Mare; Havant v Tonbridge; Margate v Forest Green Rovers; St Leonards Stamcroft v Waterlooville; Trowbridge v Bashley; Witney v Fisher; Yate v Newport IOW.

FEDERATION BREWERY NORTHERN LEAGUE First Division: Chester-le-Street v West Auckland; Crook v South Shields; Guisborough v Billingham Synthonia; Murton v Dunston FB; RTM Newcastle v Easington; Seaham Red Star v Morpeth; Shildon v Whickham; Tow Law v Consett; Whitby v Durham.

INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND ALLIANCE: Barwell v Rocester; Blakenall v Chasetown; Halesowen Harriers v Pelsall Villa; Rushall Olympic v Boldmere [Bloxwich]; Sandwell Borough v Boldmere St Michaels; Shifnal v Pershore; Knypersley Victoria v Stapenhill; Stratford v Oldbury; West Midlands Police v Willenhall.

JEWSON EASTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: Diss v March; Fakenham v Harwich & Parkeston; Great Yarmouth v Tiptree; Hadleigh v Gorleston; Halstead v Felixstowe; Lowestoft v Soham; Stowmarket v Bury Town; Sudbury Town v Clacton; Warboys v Woodbridge; Wisbech v Sudbury Wanderers.

JEWSON WESSEX LEAGUE: Totton v Gosport Borough; Aerostructures v East Cowes; Bournemouth FC v Thatcham; Brockenhurst v Petersfield; Christchurch v Bemerton Heath; Cowes v Portsmouth RN; Downton v Whitchurch; Eastleigh v BAT; Romsey v Ryde; Wimborne v Andover.

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE First Division: Chadderton v Prescot; Nantwich [Kidsgrove] v Blackpool Rovers; Salford v Maine Road; St Helens v Rossendale. **Challenge Cup second round:** Eastwood Hanley v Burscough; Maghull v Glossop; Mossley v Clitheroe; Penrith v Atherton Collieries; Tetley Walker v Holker Old Boys; Trafford v Darwen; Vauxhall GM v Nantwich.

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE Premier Division: Armthorpe v Hatfield Main; Arnold v Ossett Town; Ashfield v Thackley; Belper v Pickering; Brigg v Glasshoughton; Hallam v Sheffield; Maltby v Liversedge; Pontefract v Denaby; Selby v North Ferriby.

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE Premier Division: Bideford v Mangotsfield; Bridgwater v Brislington; Calne v Bridport; Chard v Torrington; Odd Down v Taunton; Paulton v Barnstaple; Westbury v Tiverton. **Les Phillips Cup second round:** Crediton v Keynsham.

UHLSPORT UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Cogenhoe v Kempston; Mirrlees Blackstone v Bourne; Newport Pagnell v Wootton; Northampton Spencer v Long Buckby; Spalding v Holbeach; Stewarts & Lloyds Corby v Potton; Wellingborough v Stamford. **League Cup second round:** Boston Town v St Neots; Eynesbury v Desborough; Ford Sports v Stotfold.

UNIJET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE First Division: Burgess Hill v Shoreham; Eastbourne Town v Hassocks; Langney v Arundel; Oakwood v Selsey; Peacehaven & Telscombe v Horsham YMCA; Portfield v Mile Oak; Southwick v Pagham; Three Bridges v Hailsham; Whitehawk v Ringmer; Wick v Saltdean.

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE First Division: Chatham v Thamesmead; Corinthian v Furness; Crockenhill v Whitstable (2.15); Deal v Canterbury; Folkestone Invicta v Tunbridge Wells; Herne Bay v Cray; Sheppey v Lordswood; Slade Green v Faversham; Ramsgate v Woolwich.

PRESS & JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE: Brora Rangers v Wick Academy; Deveronvale v Buckie Thistle; Elgin v Lossiemouth; Fort William v Clachnacuddin; Fraserburgh v Peterhead; Huntly v Cove Rangers.

SMIRNOFF IRISH LEAGUE Premier Division: Cliftonville v Linfield; Coleraine v Portadown; Glenavon v Ards; Glentoran v Crusaders. **First Division:** Ballyclare v Newry; Bangor v Distillery; Larne v Ballymena; Omagh v Carrick.

LEAGUE OF WALES: Carmarthen v Flint; Connah's Quay v Newtown; Rhyl v Inter Cable-Tel Cardiff; Ton Pentre v Llansantffraid; Welshpool v Porthmadog.

WELSH CUP Fourth round: Aberystwyth v Ebbw Vale; Barry v Cemaes Bay; Briton Ferry v BP Llandarcy; Caernarfon v Conwy (2.30); Grange Quins v Cwmbran (2.0); Maesteg Park v Holywell; Porth Tywyn v Caersws (2.0); Porthcawl v Port Talbot (2.0).

Rugby Union

PILKINGTON CUP Fifth round: Bath v London Irish (3.0); Coventry v Kendal (3.0); Gloucester v Leeds (3.0); Harlequins v Cheltenham (3.0); Leicester v Newbury (2.30); Moseley v Wigton (3.0); Nottingham v London Scottish (3.0); Orrell v Bedford (1.45); Preston Grasshoppers v Northampton (2.0); Reading v Saracens (2.0); Rotherham v Rosslyn Park (2.15); Sale v Richmond (2.05); Wakefield v Waterloo (2.30); Wasps v Rugby (2.30) (at Sudbury).

COURAGE CLUBS CHAMPIONSHIP National League Three: Exeter v Havant (3.0); Harrogate v Fylde (2.15); London Welsh v Morley (2.15); Lydney v Redruth (3.0); Wharfedale v Liverpool St Helens (2.15). **National League Four North:** Birmingham & Solihull v Sandal (2.30); Manchester v Aspatria (2.30); Stoke-on-Trent v Sheffield (2.30); Stourbridge v Nuneaton (2.30); Worcester v Hereford (2.30). **National League Four South:** Barking v Weston-super-Mare (2.30); Charlton Park v Askeans (2.30); High Wycombe v North Walsham (2.15); Metropolitan Police v Henley (2.30); Plymouth v Camberley (2.30).

SWALEC CUP Fifth round: Rhymney v Ammanford (2.0) 156 UWIC (Cardiff Institute) v Abertillery (2.30); Whitland v Builth Wells (2.30); Abercarn v Ystradgynlais (2.30); Blackwood v Hirwaun (2.30); Newcastle Emlyn v Resolven (2.30).

WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE First Division: *All matches postponed.* **Second Division:** Aberavon v Maesteg (2.30); Llandovery v Cross Keys (2.30).

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CHAMPIONSHIP Premier League Third Division: Stewart's Melville FP v Musselburgh (2.0). **Premier League Fourth Division:** Corstorphine v Hillhead/Jordanhill (2.0); Grangemouth v Gordonians (2.0); Langholm v Haddington (2.0).

INSURANCE CORPORATION IRISH LEAGUE First Division: Ballymena v Old Crescent (2.30); Garryowen v Dungannon (2.30); Lansdowne v Instonians (2.30); Old Belvedere v Blackrock College (2.30); Old Wesley v Terenure College (2.30); St Mary's College v Shannon (2.30); Young Munster v Cork Constitution (2.30). **Second Division:** Clontarf v Highfield (2.30); Dolphin v Derry (2.30); Greystones v DLSP (2.30); Malone v Wanderers (2.30); Monkstown v Sunday's Well (2.30); NIFC v UCC (2.30); Skerries v Bective Rangers (2.30).

CLUB MATCH: Winnington Park v Walsall (2.15).

Rugby League

SILK CUT CHALLENGE CUP First round: Askam v Thatto Heath (2.0); Barrow Island v Waterhead (2.0); Beverley v Embassy (2.0); Blackbrook v Kells (2.0); Dewsbury Moor v Upton & Frickley (2.0); Dudley Hill v Park Amateurs (2.30); East Leeds v Kingston Common (2.0); Eastmoor v Worth Village (2.0); Egremont v Folly Lane (2.0); Featherstone Amateur v West Bowling (2.0); Hemel Hempstead v Leeds University (2.30); Heworth v Students RLOB (2.30); Hull Dockers v Bisons (2.0); Leigh East v Keighley Albion (2.0); Leigh Miners v Farnworth (2.0); Lock Lane v Stanningley (2.0); Mayfield v Eccles (2.0); Milford v Norland (2.0); Millom v Hagginshaw (2.0); Moldgreen v Durham University (2.0); Normanton v Clayton (2.0); Oldham St Annes v Siddal (2.0); Oulton v Ideal ABI (2.0); Ovenden v Hensingham (2.0); Redhill v London Colonials (2.0); Shaw Cross v BRK (2.0); Skirlaugh v Queens (2.0); Thornhill v New Earswick (2.0); Walney Central v Westfield Hotel (2.0); West Hull v East Hull (2.0); Wigan St Judes v Wigan Rose BR (2.0); Wigan St Patrick's v Halton Simms Cross (2.30); Woolston v Gateshead (2.30); York Acorn v Fryston (2.0).

Hockey

NORTH Division One: Norton v Ben Rhydding.

MIDLAND INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP Pool C: Edgbaston, Harborne, Beeston, Bromsgrove. **Pool D:** Shrewsbury, West Bridgford, Kidderminster, Cannock. (9.30 to 6.0) *(at Kidderminster).*

Ice hockey

SUPERLEAGUE: Basingstoke Bison v Bracknell Bees (6.30); Manchester Storm v Ayr Scottish Eagles (6.40); Nottingham Panthers v Sheffield Steelers (7.0).

PREMIER LEAGUE: Guildford Flames v Kingston Hawks (6.0); Peterborough Pirates v Slough Jets (5.30); Telford Tigers v Medway Bears (7.30).

NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE: Castlereagh Knights v Fife Flyers (6.0); Murrayfield Royals v Whitley Warriors (7.0); Paisley Pirates v Blackburn Hawks (7.0).

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Derby Storm v Chester Jets (7.30); Leicester Riders v Exide London Towers (7.30); Newcastle Eagles v Peugeot Bullets Birmingham (7.30); Hemel & Watford Royals v Manchester Giants (7.30); Thames Valley Tigers v Converse Crystal Palace (8.0).

NATIONAL LEAGUE First Division (Men): Mid Sussex v Brixton (7.30); Nottingham v Coventry (8.0); Oxford v Solent (8.0). **(Women):** Northampton v Sheffield (8.0); Nottingham v Birmingham (6.0); Rhondda v Barking & Dagenham (6.30); Spelthorne v Harlesden (6.0).

Other sports

CYCLING: Euroleague (Manchester).

EQUESTRIANISM: Olympia Championships (Kensington, London).

POOL: Mosconi Cup 9-Ball Challenge: Europe v America (Dagenham).

SWIMMING: ASA National Winter Championship (Sheffield).

TOMORROW

Football

HARP LAGER NATIONAL LEAGUE OF IRELAND Premier Division: Bray Wanderers v Sligo Rovers (2.0); Derry City v Bohemians (3.15).

Rugby Union

SCOTTISH INTER-DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP: Caledonia v Scottish Borders (3.0) *(at Kirkcaldy)*; Edinburgh v Glasgow (2.30) *(at Myreside).*

PILKINGTON CUP Fifth round: Bristol v Blackheath (3.0); Newcastle v West Hartlepool (2.0).

Rugby League

SILK CUT CUP First round: Blackpool v Haydock (2.30); Saddleworth v Ellenborough (2.30).

Ice hockey

SUPERLEAGUE: Ayr Eagles v Nottingham Panthers (6.30); Cardiff Devils v Manchester Storm (6.0); Newcastle Cobras v Basingstoke Bison (6.30); Sheffield Steelers v Bracknell Bees (6.30).

PREMIER LEAGUE: Kingston Hawks v Slough Jets (5.45); Medway Bears v Guildford Flames (5.15); Peterborough Pirates v Telford Tigers (6.30); Solihull Blaze v Swindon IceLords (7.0).

NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE: Blackburn Hawks v Whitley Warriors (6.0).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Fife Flyers v Dumfries Vikings (6.30); Murrayfield v Paisley (6.30).

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Chester Jets v Leicester Riders (6.0); Peugeot Bullets Birmingham v Bullen's Worthing Bears (7.0).

NATIONAL LEAGUE First Division (Men): Guildford v Westminster (7.30); Liverpool v Cardiff (3.30); Stockton v Ware (4.0). **(Women):** Ipswich v Thames Valley (3.30).

Other sports

EQUESTRIANISM: Olympia Championships (Kensington, London).

POOL: Mosconi Cup 9-Ball Challenge: Europe v America (Dagenham).

SWIMMING: ASA National Winter Championship (Sheffield).

هدايا من الاهل

Inchcailloch to shoot down Missile

Racing

GREG WOOD

As weather forecasters warned of a bitingly cold weekend yesterday, many a prayer will have been offered up from Portman Square for the well-being of next Thursday's Boxing Day cards. The nationwide freeze which blanked out the entire holiday programme 12 months ago is still a painful memory for racing administrators as well as bookies, since it resulted in a drop in annual betting turnover figures and thus in the Levy.

Another similar loss would be a significant blow at what is already a difficult time and the British Horseracing Board stepped in yesterday to ensure that at least one meeting will take place by sanctioning an extra all-weather card at Lingfield to bring the number of Boxing Day meetings up to 11.

Nor does it help that today's excellent card at Ascot coincides with the final Saturday before Christmas, when minds and wallets will be more concerned with those difficult last-minute presents. There is almost £150,000 in added money on offer at the Berkshire track on a programme which includes one Grade One event and two Grades Twos, not to mention the Betterware Cup Handicap Chase, the most obvious betting event, for good measure. Even in a season when time is unusually precious, it is worth taking a few minutes to sort out this last contest in particular.

The first problem to consider is just how much effect the drizzle which fell on Ascot for much of yesterday will have had on the going. Though it is still predicted as generally good-to-firm, water has an unfortunate effect on Ascot, and can rapidly turn the ground into sticky goo. The ground was fast at the five-day stage and trainers made their entries accordingly, so any softening of the surface might count against several of today's runners, Strong Medicine and Unguided Missile (for whom three miles is at the top-end of the stamina range) being the most obvious candidates.

The possibility that Unguided Missile might not quite get home is an intriguing one, since the major bookmakers makes him the morning-line favourite. He makes little appeal at around 3-1, but the same cannot be said of Inchcailloch, his principal market rival.

The winner not only of the Cesarewitch Handicap at Newmarket but also three chases in the last two months, Jeff King's chaser has apparently found a new burst of improvement at the age of seven. And, while the 7-2 offered by Coral this morning will not bring retirement significantly closer, it is still a very fair price. Major Bell, runner-up to the handicap blot Strong Promise at Ascot four weeks ago, may be a danger over today's extra half-mile, but INCHCAILLOCH (nap 2.20) will surely take all the beating.

We can only hope that the BBC's technicians will remember to press "record" on the video at 12.35 and allow viewers a good look – not just the last 200 yards – at the novice chase which opens the card. Simply Dashing, among the most impressive novice chasers seen out this season, has the obvious credentials, but there are several novices of great potential – including Or Royal, Cheryl's Lad and Country Star – in opposition, not to mention Oh So Risky, who should need little introduction. The race will figure prominently in form study before the Cheltenham Festival in March.

So too should the Long Walk Hurdle, the day's richest event, and a fascinating contest in which only Top Spin can be immediately discounted, and that as a result of his attitude problems. The race at Newbury three weeks ago, in which What A Question defeated Trainglot, will loom large in most punters' calculations, but it would be wise not to overlook the claims of **Pleasure Shared** (next best 1.45). A winner over fences earlier this season, Philip Hobbs's runner is also very capable over hurdles, and would not be inconvenienced by any ease in the ground.

BETTERWARE CUP – 10-YEAR-TALE

[illegible]

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Storm Alert (Ascot 2.50)
NB: Cheryl's Lad (Ascot 12.35)

Make A Stand, recent winner of a competitive handicap at Sandown, should take the Kennel Gate Novice Hurdle, though as with the novice chase, there are several opponents with potential and impeccable connectons who deserve respect. The hard cash may be better saved for **Mr Percy** (3.20), who is lightly raced and improving, and may surprise some better-known rivals, including Paddy's Return, last season's Triumph Hurdle winner.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

ASCOT

1.10: MAKE A STAND won one of the season's most competitive handicap hurdles at Sandown last time and has the experience, as well as the ability, to win this. **Latahaab** was a useful stayer on the Flat for the trainer of **Bowcliffe Court**, Reg Akehurst, but disappointed badly on his last two starts and may find this trip too sharp over jumps. **Perfect Pal**, sent out by a very capable trainer, looks a greater threat.

1.45: WHAT A QUESTION and **Trainglot** are meeting for the third time this season and while the weights now favour Jimmy FitzGerald's charge, the selection finished so strongly at Newbury last time that she can prevail again.

2.20: GO BALLISTIC is 10lb better off for the 3½ lengths by which he was beaten by **Inchcailloch** over this track and trip last time, when a mistake two fences out ruined his chance. He had previously won impressively over this course and distance which suits him so well. **Major Bell** also performed well here last time when beaten by only the extremely well-handicapped Strong Promise, while **Turning Trix** is another progressive performer who is the one contender that would not be troubled if the going became appreciably softer.

Sound Man retains twin options

The trainer Edward O'Grady is keeping his options open over Sound Man. The gelding was yesterday one of eight acceptors for the £30,000 Castleford Chase at Wetherby next Friday. He also still holds the entry for the King George VI Chase at Kempton on Boxing Day.

O'Grady has indicated that Sound Man is set to miss Kempton and Wetherby is also unlikely. But he stressed that there was a still a chance Sound Man could go to Kempton. "If something untoward was to happen to One Man, we might change our minds," he said.

Richard Dunwoody's decision to desert Sound Man for One Man was cited by his part-owner David Lloyd as the main reason why the Irish horse was a probable Kempton absentee.

■ The trainer John White has been fined £1,000 by the Jockey Club disciplinary committee for "failing to exercise reasonable care" of Flying Eagle, one of his horses. White had been called to answer charges concerning the gelding's condition on leaving his yard last April and his alleged failure to inform the owner of a tendon injury the gelding suffered.

ASCOT

HYPERION

12.35 Country Star | **2.20 GO BALLISTIC (nap)**
1.10 Make A Stand | **2.50 Storm Alert**
1.45 What A Question | **3.20 Mr Percy (nb)**

GOING: Good to Firm (Good in places on hurdles course).
■ Right-hand course with testing uphill finish.
■ Course is near junction of A329 and A330. Access from M3 (June 3) and M1 (June 6). Helicopter-landing facility at course. Railway station (service from London, Waterloo) adjoins course. **ADMISSION:** Members £16 (Junior Members 16-25 years, half price); Grandstand & Paddock £10; Silver Ring £5. **CAR PARK:** No's 1, 2 & 3 £1, remainder free.

SIS

■ **LEADING TRAINERS WITH RUNNERS:** D Nicholson — 16 winners from 64 runners gives a success ratio of 25.5% and a loss to a £1 level stake of £0.78; N Twiston-Davies — 16 winners, 94 runners, 17.5%, +£17.71; J Gifford — 16 winners, 112 runners, 14.3%, -£31.43; M Pipe — 13 winners, 67 runners, 19.4%, +£11.49.
■ **LEADING JOCKEYS:** J Osborne — 28 winners, 111 rides, 25.2%, +£16.34; R Dunwoody — 19 winners, 109 rides, 17.4%, -£38.00; A Maguire — 17 winners, 98 rides, 17.3%, -£22.89; M A Fitzgerald — 15 winners, 98 rides, 15.6%, -£3.16.
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None.
WINNERS IN LAST SEVEN DAYS: Blaze Away (1.45) won at Doncaster on Saturday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Major Bell (2.20) has been sent 311 miles by A Whillans from Newmill-on-Slitrig, Borders; Unguided Missile (2.20) sent 288 miles by G Richards from Greystoke, Cumbria; *Paddy's Return* (3.20) sent 243 miles by F Murphy from Middleham, N Yorks; **Simply Dashing** (12.35) sent 227 miles by T Easterby from Great Habton, N Yorks; **Trainglot** (1.45) & **Sybillin** (2.50) sent 224 miles by J FitzGerald from Norton, N Yorks; **Ask Tom** (2.50) sent 205 miles by T Tate from Tadcaster, N Yorks.

12.35 'BOOK OF MUSIC' NOVICE CHASE (CLASS A) (Grade 2) £19,000 added 2m 3f 110yds Penalty Value £12,320

1 5P00-31 OH SO RISKY (28) (C) (M Tabor) D Elsworth 9 11 10 ....P Holley
2 2101-11 OR ROYAL (FR) (14) (D) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 5 11 10 ....A P McCoy
3 15-11F1 SIMPLY DASHING (14) (Steve Hammond) T Easterby 5 11 7 ....R Dunwoody
4 6 BOLSHIE BARON (11) (M H Weston) M Weston 7 11 3 ....Mr M Harris
5 11014-2 CHERYL'S LAD (12) (BF) (Mrs Elaine Baines) N Henderson 6 11 3 ....M A Fitzgerald
6 11214U COUNTRY STAR (7) (BF) (HRH Prince Fahd Salman) C Brooks 5 11 3 ....G Bradley
7 232323 LUCKY DOLLAR (17) (D P D Milner) K Bailey 8 11 3 ....C Llewellyn
8 260245 SHALIK (4) (S Curran) J Jenkins 6 11 3 ....N T Egan
– 8 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Or Royal, 3-1 Simply Dashing, 5-1 Oh So Risky, 6-1 Country Star, 8-1 Cheryl's Lad, 20-1 Lucky Dollar, 33-1 others
1995: Senor El Betrutti 6 11 3 G Bradley 66-1 (Mrs S Nock) 8 ran

FORM GUIDE

SIMPLY DASHING ran up a winning sequence of six over hurdles last season and would be unbeaten in all four starts over fences this term if he had not got in too low and somersaulted at Aintree four weeks ago. He has had a confidence-boosting win at Wetherby since and, although the opposition has been second-rate so far, he kept improving over hurdles and could have the scope to deal with this stronger field. **Or Royal** appeared fortunate to hold Super Coin, who pecked badly at the final fence, at Chepstow and followed up there soon after when the same-rival fell and left him clear at the second-last. Going slightly better, Or Royal was 5lb worse off on that occasion. He looks a promising French import and is open to improvement, though if the weather holds up he will have a lot faster ground to contend with. **Oh So Risky**, a smart hurdler in his time, made a belated debut over fences here four weeks ago and proved far too strong for his only serious rival, Dream Ride, who subsequently was beaten four lengths when in receipt of 12lb from Or Royal at Chepstow a fortnight ago. **Cheryl's Lad** is better than his length-and-a-half defeat by Scottish Bambi at Ludlow on his chasing debut suggests. **Country Star** was in the process of making an impressive start over fences until he stood off too far at the fourth-last at Doncaster last Saturday and unseated his rider. The race went to Simply Dashing's inferior stablemate Golden Hello. **Selection:** SIMPLY DASHING

1.10 MITIE GROUP KENNEL GATE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS A) (Grade 2) £14,000 added 2m 110yds BBC1

1 11-1251 MAKE A STAND (14) (D) (P A Deal) M Pipe 5 11 7 ....A P McCoy
2 BAHAMIAN SUNSHINE (USA) (Lucayan Stud) R Akehurst 5 11 0 ....G Bradley
3 P1 BOWCLIFFE COURT (14) (D) (A D Spence) R Akehurst 4 11 0 ....A Maguire
4 DANCES WITH HOOVES (V Squegal) D ffrench Davis 4 11 0 ....S McNeill
5 5/4410- EAGLES REST (283) (Lady Lloyd Webber) N Henderson 5 11 0 ....M A Fitzgerald
6 LATAHAAB (USA) (Sir Eric Parker) J Gifford 5 11 0 ....P Hide
7 110/ PERFECT PAL (605) (Whitcombe Manor Racing) Miss G Kelleway 5 11 0 ....R Dunwoody
8 SUPER HIGH (C Hammond) P Howling 4 11 0 ....N Williamson
9 114 SUPREME CHARM (29) (P J Vogt) K Bailey 4 11 0 ....C Llewellyn
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Make A Stand, 5-1 Bahamian Sunshine, 7-1 Bowcliffe Court, 8-1 Latahaab, 10-1 Eagles Rest, Supreme Charm, 12-1 Perfect Pal, 20-1 others
1995: Call Equiname 5 11 4 A P McCoy 7-4 (P Nicholls) 10 ran

FORM GUIDE

MAKE A STAND turned Sandown's William Hill Handicap Hurdle into a procession and his efficient hurdling is likely to carry him clear of this inexperienced field. **Bowcliffe Court** is one of only two of the opposition to have raced over hurdles and he made up for his saddle slipping early on at Newbury by beating Supreme Genoton on soft ground at Chepstow a fortnight ago. He was a stayer on the Flat and this will not be much of a test of stamina, on top of which the runner-up was beaten in ordinary company at Exeter in the week. **Bahamian Sunshine** was rated higher than stablemate Bowcliffe Court on the Flat. He, too, was a stayer and may find himself chopped for foot against Make A Flyer over this trip on fast ground. That could also apply to **Latahaab**, rated roughly the same as Bahamian Sunshine in staying events on the Flat last season. **Supreme Charm** did not get home behind Carole's Crusader in a three-miler here last month and is back to two miles, the distance of his two bumper wins in Ireland. A better prospect may be Richard Dunwoody's mount **Perfect Pal**, winner of bumpers here and at Lingfield when last seen two seasons ago. **Selection:** MAKE A STAND

1.45 LONG WALK HURDLE (CLASS A) (Grade 1) £40,000 3m 1f 110yds Penalty Value £25,240 BBC1

1 1P1-311 BLAZE AWAY (USA) (7) (C) (Paul Mellon) I Balding 5 11 7 ....A P McCoy
2 2236-12 OCEAN HAWK (28) (C BF) (M Archer & J Broadhurst) N Twiston-Davies 4 11 7 ....C Llewellyn
3 1011-1F PLEASURE SHARED (7) (C) (BF) (Tony Eaves) P Hobbs 8 11 7 ....N Williamson
4 165-3P6 TOP SPIN (21) (C) (Julian Duncan) J Jenkins 7 11 7 ....A Maguire
5 /111-13 TRAINGLOT (21) (D) (BF) (Marquesa de Moratalla) J FitzGerald 9 11 7 ....R Dunwoody
6 62-1021 WHAT A QUESTION (21) (Mrs Miles Valentine) M Moris (Ir) 8 11 2 ....G Bradley
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Pleasure Shared, 11-4 What A Question, 7-2 Trainglot, 9-2 Ocean Hawk, 6-1 Blaze Away, 20-1 Top Spin
1995: Silver Wedge 4 11 7 J Osborne 7-1 (O Sherwood) 11 ran

FORM GUIDE

Trainglot ran out a convincing winner from **What A Question** at Wetherby last month yet failed by some way to confirm the form on 7lb worse terms at Newbury three weeks ago. The easier ground there certainly suited the mare, yet the way Trainglot folded between the last two it may have been more than just the ground and weight pull that beat him. They face each other again on the same terms as Wetherby, and on faster ground. It ought to go Trainglot's way this time, though even if it does the four-year-old **OCEAN HAWK** could have the measure of both. Silver Wedge won this race last year as a four-year-old and Ocean Hawk, a second-season juvenile, could follow suit. He has improved dramatically since being put up to three miles and ran out an easy winner from Fieldridge and Olympian at Kempton on his reappearance. Next time out here, he ran a cracking trial for this, going down by just a head to Olympian on 9lb worse terms. A bit of cut in the ground would help **Pleasure Shared** but it was riding fairly fast when he won the big novice stayers' event at Aintree in early spring. To show that was not a fluke, he beat Seekin Cash over today's course and distance (good to soft) soon after. Reverting to hurdling after an fall in a Lingfield chase last Saturday is not be a problem. **Selection:** OCEAN HAWK

2.20 BETTERWARE CUP (HANDICAP CHASE) (CLASS B) £35,000 3m 110yds Penalty Value £24,379 BBC1

1 32243-4 TRAVADO (46) (Mrs P Sherwood) N Henderson 10 12 0 ....M A Fitzgerald
2 12123-1 UNGUIDED MISSILE (21) (CD) (D E Harrison) G Richards 8 11 11 ....R Dunwoody
3 2P/024-3 BRADBURY STAR (9) (James Campbell) J Gifford 11 11 6 ....P Hide
4 1112F-5 DEXTRA DOVE (21) (Dextra Lighting Systems) S Earle 9 10 9 ....G Bradley
5 1111-12 MAJOR BELL (28) (D) (Ian T Middlemass) A Whillans 8 10 7 ....N Williamson
6 P-110F2 STRONG MEDICINE (9) (D) (BF) (Dr D B A Silk) K Bailey 9 10 6 ....C Llewellyn
7 414-111 INCHCAILLOCH (9) (CD) (F J Carter) J King 7 10 5 (5ex) ....C Maude
8 461-412 GO BALLISTIC (28) (CD) (BF) (Mrs B J Lockhart) J O'Shea 7 10 0 ....A P McCoy
9 112P3-1 TURNING TRIX (21) (D) (Mel Davies) D Nicholson 9 10 0 ....A Maguire
– 9 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Go Ballistic 9st 13lb, Turning Trix 9st 13lb.
BETTING: 3-1 Unguided Missile, 4-1 Inchcailloch, 9-2 Dextra Dove, 5-1 Major Bell, 6-1 Turning Trix, Go Ballistic, 12-1 Travado, 16-1 others
1995: Unguided Missile 7 10 8 R Dunwoody 7-2 (G Richards) 9 ran

FORM GUIDE

Unguided Missile overcame a bad mistake four out and pecking at the last to catch the wandering Rough Quest in this race 12 months ago. Runner-up apart, Unguided Missile continued to give a good account in the best company after that and looked as good as ever – although he was entitled to at the weights – at Haydock on his reappearance. That will have set him up nicely for this and the chances of a repeat must be fairly high. If **TURNING TRIX** has a big race in him it could be this from his position at the foot of the handicap. The nine-year-old has not had a great deal of racing over fences so there could be some improvement in him, and that looked the case when he won under a big weight at Newcastle on his comeback. He has won on this faster ground. **Inchcailloch**, is an improved chaser this season unbeaten in all three starts, including a three-and-a-half-length defeat of **Go Ballistic** over the course and distance. Inchcailloch's subsequent Sandown win confirms the progress he is making, but a 10lb pull must bring Go Ballistic bang into contention. He had won so easily over the course and distance the time before. **Major Bell** met his first defeat over fences when Strong Promise proved too strong here four weeks ago, but he stayed on well over an inadequate trip. **Dextra Dove**'s run in the Hennessy was commendable after all his problems. **Travado** has fallen in two attempts at this distance. The ground was against him at Exeter on his return, though he and **Bradbury Star** are no longer the force they once were. **Selection:** TURNING TRIX

2.50 FROGMORE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £14,000 added 2m Penalty Value £9,458

1 F/1161-1 ASK TOM (21) (D) (B T Stewart-Brown) T Tate 7 12 0 ....R Garritty
2 554-113 STORM ALERT (14) (CD) (Mrs Dawn Perrett) D Nicholson 10 11 11 ....A Maguire
3 402/204- SYBILLIN (539) (CD) (Marquesa de Moratalla) J FitzGerald 10 11 1 ....R Dunwoody
4 1/5414-2 AROUND THE HORN (22) (D) (Pell-mell Partners) J Gifford 9 10 10 ....S McNeill
5 4-1P111 ZEREDAR (NZ) (8) (D) (I M S Racing) K Bailey 6 10 0 ....C Llewellyn B
– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Zeredar 9st 13lb.
BETTING: 5-4 Ask Tom, 3-1 Storm Alert, 9-2 Zeredar, 7-1 Around The Horn, 8-1 Sybillin
1995: Front Street 8 10 1 J Osborne 11-8 (S Sherwood) 8 ran

FORM GUIDE

Front Street made the most of a light weight to beat better horses in this race 12 months ago. Blinkers have done so much for **Zeredar** in his last three starts that he has to be given serious consideration from just a pound out of the handicap. Zeredar has gone up 25lb as a result, and while that might seem a lot, **ASK TOM** has been raised 13lb in one swoop. He was impressive when drawing away in the straight at Newbury on Hennessy day and this young chaser can win again. **Storm Alert** was almost on the floor at the third at Sandown last time and the run can be forgotten. This course specialist is back to something like his best this season, yet even that might not be good enough as he has never won off a mark as high as today's. Two miles on fast ground may not provide the best opportunity for **Around The Horn**. **Selection:** ASK TOM

3.20 KNIGHTS ROYAL HURDLE (CLASS B) £12,000 added 2m 110yds Penalty Value £8,559

1 11221-3 PADDY'S RETURN (57) (CD) (BF) (P O'Donnell) F Murphy 4 11 10 ....R Dunwoody B
2 210151- TRAGIC HERO (231) (D) (Knight Hawks Partnership) M Pipe 4 11 10 ....A P McCoy B
3 4-4FR65 NON VINTAGE (7) (CD) (Alan Mann) M Chapman 5 11 5 ....W Worthington
4 44-5450 ALLTIME DANCER (21) (D) (H M Heyman) O Sherwood 4 11 2 ....G Bradley
5 052F1-4 ASHWELL BOY (7) (CD) (A B S Racing) P Hobbs 5 11 2 ....N Williamson
6 21- TIBETAN (350) (D) (Lady Herries) Lady Herries 4 11 2 ....M A Fitzgerald
7 3/35-11F MR PERCY (21) (D) (Felix Rosenstiel's Widow & Son) J Gifford 5 10 12 ....P Hide
8 26F0-50 ESKIMO NEL (14) (D) (First Chance Racing) J Spearing 5 10 11 ....R Gardley
9 240-142 MISTINGUETT (29) (D) (BF) (John Duggan) N Twiston-Davies 4 10 11 ....C Llewellyn
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 7-2 Paddy's Return, 4-1 Tragic Hero, Ashwell Boy, 5-1 Tibetan, 7-1 Eskimo Nel, 8-1 Mr Percy, 10-1 others
1995: Pridwell 5 11 5 A P McCoy 6-1 (M Pipe) 8 ran

FORM GUIDE

TIBETAN was reversing earlier Newbury form with Our Kris and looked a real prospect when taking apart a hot field of juveniles at Sandown in January. Our Kris was not too far behind some of the best and it may be worth taking a chance with Tibetan's fitness and lack of experience. **Paddy's Return** was blinkered for the first time when beating **Mistinguett** into third in the Triumph Hurdle and they are back on today after failing to run up to that form with Mistinguett at Newbury in October on his first outing since. It would not be a surprise to see him bounce back here. **Tragic Hero** proved what a tough sort he was after finishing down the field in the Triumph by going on to win at Aintree and then he beat experienced handicappers at Haydock. **Ashwell Boy** was touched off by Tragic Hero's stablemate Silver Shred at Aintree (2½m). He ran better than his final placing suggested at Cheltenham last week and that will have put him right for this, but a longer trip would probably be more to his advantage. **Eskimo Nel** has yet to recapture last season's decent form. **Selection:** TIBETAN

UTTOXETER

HYPERION

12.25 Mister RM 12.55 Lord Gyllene 1.30 Burntwood Melody 2.05 Art Prince 2.35 Arithmetic 3.05 Garolo 3.35 Pot Black UK

GOING: Good to Soft (Good in places).
■ Left-hand course. Run-in of 170yd.
■ Course is SE of town near B5017. Uttoxeter station (Derby-Crewe line) adjoins course. **ADMISSION:** Club £15 (OAPs £13); Tattersalls £10 (OAPs £7); Course £3. **CAR PARK:** Free.

SIS | RACING CHANNEL

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Gutteridge (12.25).
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Art Prince (2.05) won at Doncaster on Saturday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Menshaar (1.30) has been sent 190 miles by L Lungo from Carrutherstown, Dumfries.

12.25 TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL PAST PUPILS NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 2m

1 1154 MISTER RM (34) (D) (BF) N Twiston-Davies 4 11 5 ....D Walsh
2 522-313 PRUSSIA (43) W Clay 5 11 5 ....D Gallagher
3 013-253 SAMANID (36) (D) Miss L Siddall 4 11 5 ....D Pears
4 5-41 STORMY PASSAGE (18) P Hobbs 6 11 5 ....G Tormey
5 BALLYRANTER M Hammond 7 10 12 ....Mr C Bonner (3)
6 3/ BANNY HILL LAD (631) C Mostock 6 10 12 ....J R Kavanagh
7 P-20352 CADDY'S FIRST (12) S Mellor 4 10 12 ....
8 56-PP6 GUTTERIDGE (8) T Kaddy 6 10 12 ....J Lawrence B
9 3/2P020- JOSHUA'S VISION (217) R Lee 5 10 12 ....P Henley (3)
10 3 MANASIS (NZ) (42) S Brookshaw 5 10 12 ....R Johnson
11 OP23P3/ NIYAKA (583) Capt J Wilson 9 10 12 ....W Marston
12 P. OUR TOM (21) J Wharton 4 10 12 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
13 PERCY BRAITHWAITE Miss P Whittle 4 10 12 ....K Hibbert (7)
14 0-0 RACING TELEGRAPH (63) C Allen 6 10 12 ....G Hogan (5)
15 00 ROOD MUSIC (35) M Meagher 5 10 12 ....Derek Byrne
16 58-2 VICTORIA DAY (43) B McMahon 4 10 7 ....T Dascombe (3)
– 16 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Stormy Passage, 9-2 Mister Rm, 6-1 Samanid, 8-1 Prussia, 10-1 Victoria Day, Percy Braithwaite, 14-1 others

12.55 CHRIS TALBOT 39TH BIRTHDAY HANDICAP CHASE £5,100 added 3m

1 2522-23 LORD GYLLENE (14) (BF) S Brookshaw 8 12 0 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
2 R1222-F WHAT'S YOUR STORY (31) (BF) D Nicholson 7 11 6 ....R Johnson
3 133FP-6 BRAES OF MAR (37) N Henderson 6 11 5 ....J R Kavanagh
4 133F-23 CELTIC TOWN (11) (C D BF) O Sherwood 8 11 3 ....J A McCarthy
5 100-4F3 SAILOR JIM (21) (C) P Dalton 9 11 2 ....W Marston
6 UP414- MY MAIN MAN (234) T George 8 10 8 ....D Walsh
7 /1322P CARLINGFORD LAKES (25) T Thomson Jones 8 10 0 ....B Powell
– 7 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Carlingford Lakes 9st 10lbs.
BETTING: 6-4 What's Your Story, 11-4 Lord Gyllene, 7-1 Celtic Town, 8-1 Braes of Mar, Sailor Jim, 10-1 My Main Man, 20-1 Carlingford Lakes

1.30 MANNY BERNSTEIN NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 3m 110yds

1 5P54/23- TILTY (USA) (385) A Streeter 6 11 10 ....T Eley V
2 8-13216 MISTER BLAKE (8) (D) R Lee 6 11 8 ....R Johnson
3 0F4-534 COOLE HILL (21) D Nicholson 5 11 7 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
4 440-4 FELLOO (38) T George 7 11 5 ....T Jenks
5 35R-561 MENSHAAR (USA) (10) (D) L Lungo 4 11 4 ....R Supple
6 0545 EVEZIO RUFO (5) N Littmoden 4 11 1 ....B Powell V
7 PPUU00 JIGGINSTOWN (21) J J O'Neill 9 10 12 ....
8 5FUBF-5 QUITE A MAN (12) S Brookshaw 8 10 11 ....T Mortimer (7)
9 04-445 HOTSPUR STREET (14) M W Easterby 4 10 6 ....W Marston B
10 FR2U46- BALLYDOUGAN (228) R Mathew 8 10 1 ....R Bellamy V
11 23/055 BURNTWOOD MELODY (15) P Dalton 5 10 0 ....J Supple

12 646-443 RIVERBANK ROSE (33) W Clay 5 10 0 ....G Tormey
13 040 NUNSON (15) R Dickin 7 10 0 ....D Gallagher
– 13 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True weights: Riverbank Rose 9st 12lb, Nunson 9st 7lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Menshaar, 4-1 Mister Blake, 6-1 Coole Hill, 8-1 Tilty, 10-1 Riverbank Rose, 12-1 Evezio Rufo, 14-1 others

2.05 HEATHYARDS NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,200 added 2m 5f

1 032F1 ART PRINCE (7) C Brooks 6 12 0 ....M Berry (7)
2 P/642-5F PEARL EPEE (11) D Nicholson 7 11 4 ....R Johnson
3 33F-P60 SPEARHEAD AGAIN (26) K Bridgwater 7 11 3 ....R Massey (3) V
4 P0044-0 RONANS GLEN (14) M Wilkinson 9 10 5 ....T J O'Sullivan
5 03634-0 WALLS COURT (11) J Birkett 9 10 4 ....L O'Hara
6 /6/1-P2P FLAMING MIRACLE (17) G Barnett 6 10 0 ....G Tormey B
7 0200- BARONCELLI (295) M Wilkinson 6 10 0 ....J Lawrence
8 00-6 MYSTIC COURT (24) A Turnell 5 10 0 ....Doubtful
9 306/2/0 PLASSY BOY (11) K Burke 7 10 0 ....R Supple
10 F050-6P HEATHYARDS BOY (22) D McCain 6 10 0 ....D Walsh B
– 10 declared –

Minimum: 10st. True weights: Plassy Boy 9st 12lb, Heathyards Boy 9st 10lb.
BETTING: 4-5 Art Prince, 7-1 Pearl Epee, 8-1 Spearhead Again, Walls Court, 10-1 Baroncelli, 14-1 Ronans Glen, Flaming Miracle, 20-1 others

2.35 HOUGHTON VAUGHAN HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £7,000 2m 4f 110yds

1 121/206- EXPRESS GIFT (302) Mrs M Reveley 7 11 10 ....N Smith
2 1122D0 DR LEUNT (42) P Hobbs 5 11 5 ....G Tormey
3 P3011-4 OUTSET (21) (D) M Hammond 8 10 12 ....Mr C Bonner (3)
4 3U/743-0 BEACHY HEAD (21) (D) J J O'Neill 8 10 8 ....
5 211-242 MIM-LOU-AND (36) Miss H Knight 4 10 0 ....R Johnson
6 5408-22 HIGH GRADE (31) (D) Miss S Wilton 8 10 0 ....S Powell
7 4110-02 ARITHMETIC (35) (D) Mrs J Pitman 6 10 0 ....W Marston
8 24-4313 DALLY BOY (21) (BF) T Easterby 4 10 0 ....J O'Callaghan
– 8 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: High Grade 9st 13lb, Arithmetic 9st 12lb, Dally Boy 9st 12lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Express Gift, 7-2 Dr Leunt, 4-1 Outset, 9-2 Mim-Lou-And, 7-1 Dally Boy, 10-1 Arithmetic, 12-1 others

3.05 WELLMAN PLC NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,100 added 2m

1 13020-3 GAROLO (FR) (21) C Brooks 6 11 0 ....D Gallagher
2 040/UP/ GLENMAVIS (794) Dr P Pritchard 9 11 0 ....Dr P Pritchard
3 21201-P ROBINS PRIDE (15) C Popham 6 11 0 ....T Dascombe (3)
4 311-15P ROLFE (NZ) (37) D Nicholson 6 11 0 ....R Johnson B
5 10203/6 WHO IS EQUINAME (404) N Henderson 6 11 0 ....J R Kavanagh
– 5 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Rolfe, 2-1 Garolo, 4-1 Who Is Equiname, 6-1 Robins Pride, 14-1 Glenmavis

3.35 WEATHERBYS 'STARS OF TOMORROW' NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,550 2m

1 BENEFIT-IN-KIND Miss H Knight 4 11 4 ....Mr A Wintle (7)
2 BLOWING ROCK R Dickin 4 11 4 ....D Gallagher
3 CHERRYMORE Mrs J Pitman 5 11 4 ....S Hogan (3)
4 4 EL CRANK SENOR (71) R Woodhouse 4 11 4 ....Derek Byrne
5 GEM'S PRECIOUS T Wall 5 11 4 ....R Massey (3)
6 0/ GO FOR THE DOCTOR (647) B McMahon 6 11 4 ....T Dascombe (3)
7 JUSTJIM N Twiston-Davies 4 11 4 ....D Walsh
8 6 JUSTLIKEJIM (14) J L Harris 5 11 4 ....Mr R Thornton (5)
9 LEDBURIAN Miss P Whittle 6 11 4 ....K Hibbert (7)
10 MR MONTAGUE T Donnelly 4 11 4 ....T Eley
11 PARK END C Popham 4 11 4 ....T O'Connor (7)
12 3 POT BLACK UK (42) P Hobbs 5 11 4 ....G Tormey
13 THE BUG J Leigh 6 11 4 ....
14 5/ TOM TUGG (637) W McKenzie-Coles 6 11 4 ....R Johnson
15 MAY ROSE P Hobbs 6 10 13 ....Mr S Durack (7)
16 THE MUCKLE QUINE J J O'Neill 5 10 13 ....
– 16 declared –

BETTING: 4-1 Justjim, 5-1 Cherrymore, 7-1 Benefit-In-Kind, 8-1 May Rose, El Crank Senor, 10-1 The Muckle Quine, 12-1 Pot Black Uk, 16-1 others

LINGFIELD

HYPERION

12.30 Shepherds Rest 1.00 Bayrak 1.35 Silver Shred 2.10 Red Raja 2.40 Boardroom Shuffle 3.10 Mr Pickpocket 3.40 Repeat Offer

GOING: Good to Soft (Soft in places on Hurdles course).
■ Left-hand, sharp undulating course. Run-in of 200yds.
■ Course is south east of town on B2028. Lingfield station (served by London, Victoria) adjoins course. **ADMISSION:** Members £13, Family Enclosure £9. **CAR PARK:** Club £3; remainder free.

SIS | RACING CHANNEL

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Half An Inch (2.10), Bebe Grey (visored, 3.40).
WINNERS IN LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.
LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS: Castle Conner (1.00) sent 204 miles by R Frost from Buckfastleigh, Devon.

12.30 CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m 110yds

1 115-544 TICKERTY'S GIFT (7) (CD) (BF) G L Moore 6 12 0 ....M Attwater (4)
2 31135-4 HAWTHORNE GLEN (7) (CD) Mrs M Long 9 11 7 ....A Irvine (4)
3 01232-3 SHEPHERDS REST (10) (D) S Mellor 4 11 2 ....S Hearn (7)
4 2432-32 PEDALTOTHEMETAL (9) P Mitchell 4 10 11 ....D J Kavanagh
5 34PU/ WIDE SUPPORT (1,706) (D) A Moore 11 10 11 ....M Batchelor (4)
6 P3/060/ DERISBAY (638) J Bridger 8 10 1 ....Sophie Mitchell B
7 00-66 MUSEUM (21) P Winkworth 5 10 0 ....X Aizpuru (4)
8 442532- BALLYMGYR (339) E Wheeler 7 10 0 ....M Griffiths (4)
9 U005-6P FATHER POWER (105) S Bowen 8 10 0 ....C Rae (4)
– 9 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Father Power 9st 5lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Pedaltothemetal, 3-1 Shepherds Rest, 9-2 Tickerty's Gift, 5-1 Ballymgyr, 6-1 Hawthorne Glen, 10-1 Wide Support, 16-1 Museum, 20-1 others

1.00 PORT & STILTON NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £3,600 added 2m

1 12U36-1 RIVER LEVEN (11) (D) D Gandolfo 7 11 10 ....D Fortt (3) B
2 22411/ BAYRAK (USA) (977) P Kelleway 6 11 8 ....A Bates (5)
3 P0F-55 GLENDOE (24) A Turnell 5 11 8 ....Doubtful
4 3P2P-56 STAGE PLAYER (14) Miss C Caroe 10 11 4 ....D Leahy
5 0-45P31 CASTLECONNER (15) R Frost 5 11 4 ....Mr A Holdsworth B
6 100PB-F RELKOWEN (19) A Turnell 6 11 2 ....M Richards
7 054-PP6 KING'S GOLD (15) Mrs L Richards 6 11 0 ....Doubtful
8 0F4-5P5 POLICEMANS PRIDE (16) M Madgwick 7 10 8 ....B Fenton
9 6P34-UP KENTAVRUS WAY (17) A Moore 5 10 0 ....N Mann
– 9 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Kentavrus Way 9st 7lb.
BETTING: evens River Leven, 7-2 Castleconner, 4-1 Stage Player, 5-1 Bayrak, 10-1 King's Gold, 12-1 others

1.35 CHRISTMAS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £5,000 added mares 2m 3f 110yds

1 23101-3 SILVER SHRED (42) M Pipe 5 12 0 ....
2 361P-11 SAIL BY THE STARS (18) (D) T Forster 7 10 13 ....A Thornton
3 132-235 FORTUNES COURSE (24) (D) J King 7 10 8 ....T J Murphy
4 3411-03 LESSONS LASS (24) Miss H Knight 4 10 1 ....B Fenton
5 3P3651- HANDY LASS (213) (D) J Smith 7 10 0 ....N Griffiths (7)
– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Handy Lass 9st 10lb.
BETTING: 5-4 Silver Shred, 7-4 Sail By The Stars, 5-1 Lessons Lass, 7-1 Fortunes Course, 10-1 Handy Lass

2.10 JARDINE INSURANCE SERVICES HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 3YO 2m 110yds

1 01 RED RAJA (12) P Mitchell 11 5 ....D Gallagher
2 BAILIWICK N Graham 10 12 ....S Curran
3 6 BIGWIG (7) A Moore 10 12 ....N Mann
4 BRIGHTON ROAD G Balding 10 12 ....B Clifford
5 0 HALF AN INCH (35) T Jones 10 12 ....D Leahy B
6 64 HANBITOOH (USA) (17) Mrs A Perrett 10 12 ....G Upton
7 INDUNA MKUBWA C Wall 10 12 ....L Harvey
8 JAMES FIRST R Ingram 10 12 ....D O'Sullivan
9 ROSEBERRY AVENUE R Akehurst 10 12 ....S Ryan (5)
10 60 SAM ROCKETT (9) P Mooney 10 12 ....D J Kavanagh (5) B
11 SCOTTISH HERO Miss H Knight 10 12 ....B Fenton
12 020 STERLING FELLOW (22) D Williams 10 12 ....M Clarke V
13 F BOLD START LADY (17) E Wheeler 10 7 ....M Griffiths (7)
14 U00 EMBROIDERED (17) R M Flower 10 7 ....J K McCarthy (7)
15 ESKIMO KISS G Johnson Houghton 10 7 ....A Thornton
16 40 VERONICA FRANCO (9) B Pearce 10 7 ....T J Murphy
– 16 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Roseberry Avenue, 9-2 Red Raja, 6-1 Scottish Hero, 8-1 Hanbitooh, 10-1 Induna Mkubwa, 14-1 Bailiwick, 16-1 others

2.40 EBF NOVICE HURDLE (QUALIFIER) (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m 110yds

1 1-1 BOARDROOM SHUFFLE (26) J Gifford 5 11 5 ....L Aspell (3)
2 311/221 DANTES CAVALIER (12) D Gandolfo 6 11 5 ....D Fortt (3)
3 1410-0 JOHN DRUMM (21) P Webber 5 11 0 ....A Thornton
4 MASTER PILGRIM G Balding 4 11 0 ....B Fenton
5 4 SHANAGORE WARRIOR (18) S Mellor 4 11 0 ....N Mann
6 210-2 THREE FARTHINGS (14) (BF) J Old 6 11 0 ....G Upton
7 000-35 BELLE PERK (133) (BF) T McGovern 5 10 9 ....T J Murphy
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 4-5 Boardroom Shuffle, 11-4 Dantes Cavalier, 6-1 Three Farthings, 14-1 John Drumm, 16-1 Shanagore Warrior, Master Pilgrim, 25-1 Belle Perk

3.10 MAC VIDI NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,200 added 3m

1 32U-311 MARINERS MIRROR (15) N Twiston-Davies 9 11 7 ....Mr M Rimell
2 UP BENBULBIN (22) J Mullins 6 10 12 ....S Curran
3 455-215 KENDAL CAVALIER (14) (BF) G Balding 6 10 12 ....B Fenton
4 2CU-263 MR PICKPOCKET (14) Miss H Knight 8 10 12 ....T J Murphy
5 0/5- MYSTIC MANNA (373) A Turnell 10 10 12 ....Doubtful
6 00P0-6U GEMMA'S WAGER (14) M Campion 6 10 7 ....L Harvey
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 4-5 Mariners Mirror, 5-2 Mr Pickpocket, 5-1 Kendal Cavalier, 16-1 Benbulbin, Gemma's Wager

3.40 HOLLY & IVY MAIDEN OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,550 added 2m 110yds

1 ARKLEY ROYAL J Old 5 11 5 ....G Upton
2 CHEMIN-DE-FER B Pearce 4 11 5 ....Mrs K Hills
3 U0- HUSH (261) G Charles-Jones 5 11 5 ....Mr A Charles-Jones
4 56 IRISH DELIGHT (19) R Curtis 4 11 5 ....D Morris
5 PEACE INITIATIVE K Vincent 4 11 5 ....A Dicken
6 PITARRY D Grissell 6 11 5 ....B Fenton
7 4 REPEAT OFFER (24) P Cundell 4 11 5 ....S Curran
8 0 ROYAL DIVIDE (14) V Soane 4 11 5 ....M Richards
9 40-0 SHARIAKANNDI (FR) (38) J King 4 11 5 ....T J Murphy
10 BEBE GREY P Hedger 5 11 0 ....M Clifton (7) V
11 GOOD TIME DANCER P Webber 4 11 0 ....Mr P Scott
– 11 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Arkley Royal, 4-1 Good Time Dancer, 9-2 Repeat Offer, 6-1 Shariakanndi, 8-1 Pitarry, 10-1 Bebe Grey, 14-1 others

HAYDOCK

HYPERION

12.15 Falcon's Flame 12.45 Oat Couture 1.20 Shining Edge 1.55 Christmas Gorse 2.30 Good Vibes 3.00 General Command 3.30 Strong Mint

GOING: Good to Soft.
■ Left-hand course with imposing drop fences and run-in of two furlongs.
■ Course is near junction of A580 and M6. Newton station two miles away. **ADMISSION:** County Stand £15; Tattersalls £9; Newton Stand £4 (OAPs half-price in Tattersalls and Newton Stand). **CAR PARK:** Free.

SIS | RACING CHANNEL

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None.
WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: New Inn (1.20) won at Doncaster last Saturday.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Conti D'Estruval (3.00) sent 192 miles by G Balding from Fyfield, Hampshire.

12.15 WIRRAL HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,750 added 3YO 2m

1 0 ARABIAN HEIGHTS (15) J Mackie 10 12 ....E Husband (3)
2 64 BAASM (15) J Norton 10 12 ....W Fry
3 2 FALCON'S FLAME (66) Mrs J Ramsden 10 12 ....J Railton
4 0 IRISH KINSMAN (31) G Yardley 10 12 ....W McFarland
5 0 JOE SHAW (21) Mrs M Reveley 10 12 ....P Niven
6 0 MR GOLD (15) J Jefferson 10 12 ....Richard Guest
7 PALAMON (USA) J White 10 12 ....P Carberry
8 3 PARROT'S HILL (15) M Tompkins 10 12 ....A Dobbin
9 SHARP COMMAND P Eccles 10 12 ....
10 SHU GAA O Sherwood 10 12 ....J Osborne
11 TAGATAY M Camacho 10 12 ....E Callaghan (3)
12 044 THORNTOUN ESTATE (28) M Todhunter 10 12 ....A S Smith
13 50 WHAT JIM WANTS (21) J J O'Neill 10 12 ....
14 6 WORTH THE BILL (31) F Jordan 10 12 ....S Wynne
– 14 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Falcon's Flame, 5-1 Shu Gaa, Parrot's Hill, 8-1 Joe Shaw, 10-1 Tagatay, 12-1 Arabian Heights, Palamon, 14-1 others

12.45 SOUTHPORT NOVICE CHASE (CLASS C) £6,500 added 2m 4f

1 21410/1 OAT COUTURE (21) (C) L Lungo 8 11 6 ....Richard Guest
2 5 BLACK BROOK (14) M Hammond 7 11 0 ....P Niven
3 20112/ CARIBOO GOLD (USA) (966) K Bailey 7 11 0 ....J Railton
4 013/P-34 SLOTAMATIQUE (10) (BF) G Richards 7 11 0 ....A Dobbin
5 10/0 SPINNAKER (24) N Gaselee 6 11 0 ....J Osborne
– 5 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Oat Couture, 9-4 Cariboo Gold, 6-1 Slotamatique, 8-1 Black Brook, Spinnaker

1.20 WIDNES HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £5,000 added 2m

1 1151-35 MARCHANT MING (21) (CD) M Hammond 4 12 0 ....P Niven
2 21110-0 ELATION (14) (D) G Richards 4 11 3 ....A Dobbin
3 1214/ HOUSE CAPTAIN (845) J FitzGerald 7 11 2 ....F Leahy (3)
4 5200-61 NEW INN (7) (D) S Gollings 5 11 0 ....K Gaule
5 32-6431 SHINING EDGE (10) (D) T Easterby 4 10 9 ....J Osborne
6 1550-6 WATCH MY LIPS (57) (D) M Tompkins 4 10 0 ....D Bridgwater
7 3035/4/ ALBERTITO (FR) (588) (CD) R Hollinshead 9 10 0 ....S Wynne
– 7 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Albertito 9st 7lb.
BETTING: 9-4 Shining Edge, 4-1 House Captain, 5-1 Marchant Ming, New Inn, 7-1 Watch My Lips, 8-1 Elation, 12-1 Albertito

1.55 ST HELENS HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £10,000 added 4m 110yds

1 1/43P-1 CHRISTMAS GORSE (21) (D) N Gaselee 10 11 10 ....J Osborne
2 11PP/5-P URANUS COLLONGES (14) J FitzGerald 10 11 6 ....A Dobbin B
3 5413-45 DIAMOND FORT (4) J McConnochie 11 10 13 ....S Wynne
4 361/R32- PINK GIN (390) M Hammond 9 10 11 ....P Niven
5 3U315-6 CHIEF RAGER (14) N Twiston-Davies 7 10 8 ....D Bridgwater
6 2P2533 PAPER STAR (9) M Muggeridge 9 10 0 ....Richard Guest
7 854440 QUIXALL CROSSETT (11) E Cane 11 10 0 ....S Taylor (5)
– 7 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Paper Star 9st 12lb, Quixall Crossett 7st 2lb.
BETTING: 2-1 Christmas Gorse, 7-2 Pink Gin, 9-2 Chief Rager, 5-1 Paper Star, 6-1 Diamond Fort, 10-1 Uranus Collonges, 100-1 Quixall Crossett

2.30 EBF 'NATIONAL HUNT' NOVICE HURDLE (QUALIFIER) (CLASS D) £3,750 added 2m

1 2211 GOOD VIBES (15) T Easterby 4 11 10 ....J Osborne
2 3/112-2 ALZULU (15) (BF) J FitzGerald 5 11 0 ....P Carberry
3 050- DAN DE MAN (225) Miss L Siddall 5 11 0 ....A Dobbin
4 0 EIRESPRAY (18) M Hammond 5 11 0 ....D Bentley
5 440-4 GALEN (45) Mrs M Reveley 5 11 0 ....P Niven
6 00-032 PENTLAND SQUIRE (18) J M Jefferson 5 11 0 ....Richard Guest
7 05-50 SEYMOUR'S DOUBLE (14) Mrs A Hewitt 5 11 0 ....S Wynne
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Good Vibes, 3-1 Alzulu, 4-1 Galen, 8-1 Pentland Squire, 16-1 Eirespray, 25-1 Dan de Man, Seymour's Double

3.00 BOSTON PIT HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS C) £6,500 added 2m 4f

1 1/22511- VALIANT WARRIOR (294) (CD) M Hammond 8 11 12 ....P Niven
2 4122-11 GENERAL COMMAND (56) (D) G Richards 8 11 2 ....P Carberry
3 5-23UP5 CONTI D'ESTRUVAL (FR) (9) (D) G Balding 6 10 10 ....A Dobbin
– 3 declared –

BETTING: 4-9 General Command, 5-2 Valiant Warrior, 8-1 Conti D'Estruval

3.30 THELWALL STANDARD OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,550 added 2m

1 1- BADGER'S LANE (388) K Bailey 5 11 11 ....J Railton
2 10-0 JUST ONE QUESTION (15) (D) J J O'Neill 6 11 11 ....Richard Guest
3 541 STRONG MINT (11) (D) Mrs M Reveley 5 11 11 ....P Niven
4 BACK ON THE LASH F Murphy 4 11 4 ....P Carberry
5 BEN EIGER N Twiston-Davies 4 11 4 ....D Bridgwater
6 3 BILLY BUCKSKIN (18) J Norton 4 11 4 ....W Fry
7 BREATH OF SCANDAL O Sherwood 5 11 4 ....J Osborne
8 30 MEADOW HYMN (18) J FitzGerald 5 11 4 ....W Dwan
9 MERRY MASQUERADE Mrs M Reveley 5 11 4 ....R Hodge
10 NO FINER MAN G Richards 5 11 4 ....A Dobbin
11 00 SCHOLAR GREEN (21) G Yardley 4 11 4 ....W McFarland
12 6- SLIDE ON (255) P Evans 6 11 4 ....Gary Lyons
13 00 SOCIAL INSECURITY (11) S Gollings 5 11 4 ....K Gaule
14 0 PRIMITIVE LIGHT (8) A Smith 6 10 13 ....P Midgley (3)
– 14 declared –

BETTING: 7-2 Breath Of Scandal, 4-1 Badger's Lane, 5-1 Strong Mint, 7-1 Ben Eiger, 8-1 Billy Buckskin, Merry Masquerade, 12-1 No Finer Man, 14-1 others

RACING RESULTS

HEREFORD

12.50: 1. STAR SELECTION (E Husband) 11-2; 2. King Rat 16-1; 3. Drakestone 9-2. 12 ran. 2-1 fav Night City (5th). 12, 4. (J Mackie, Church Broughton). Tote: £7.00; £2.50, £2.00, £1.50. DF: £31.40. CSF: £82.68. NR: Supreme Charm. Trio: £30.60; £6.03 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today.

1.20: 1. MID DAY CHASER (J Osborne) 5-2; 2. Total Joy 4-1; 3. Kevasingo 50-1. 10 ran. 10-11 fav Daunt. 10, 4. (P Webber, Banbury). Tote: £3.50; £1.10, £2.00, £9.40. DF: £9.80. CSF: £12.95. Trio: £40.20. NR: Fairy Knight, It'sthebusiness.

1.50: 1. MAHLER (D Walsh) 100-30; 2. Colwall 4-1; 3. Ecu de France 50-1. 9 ran. 2-1 fav Urban Lily (4th). 2½, 7. (N Twiston-Davies, Cheltenham). Tote: £5.80; £2.70, £1.30, £6.40. DF: £15.40. CSF: £18.57. Tricast: £498.00. Trio: £46.70.

2.20: 1. CAPTAIN STOCKFORD (S Wynne) 33-1; 2. Scottish Bambi 3-1 co fav; 3. Northern Singer 3-1 co fav. 11 ran. 3-1 co fav Ashmead Rambler (6th). 4, 6. (P Wegmann, Gloucester). Tote: £68.20; £10.40, £1.70, £1.40. DF: £58.60. CSF: £130.75. Tricast: £376.31. Trio: £90.50; £65.04 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today.

2.50: 1. MY MAN IN DUNDALK (E Murphy) 2-1; 2. Fleet Cadet Evens fav; 3. Scottish Wedding 5-1. 12 ran. Nk, 11. (B Curley, Newmarket). Tote: £3.50; £2.30, £1.20, £1.70. DF: £4.40. CSF: £5.28. Trio: £12.40. NR: Persian Butterfly.

3.20: 1. INDIAN TRACKER (C Maude) 5-1; 2. Brogeen Lady 9-4 fav; 3. Anythingyoulike 14-1. 16 ran. 16, 16. (M Pipe, Wellington). Tote: £4.30; £2.40, £1.70, £5.10. DF: £10.40. CSF: £18.79. Trio: £57.10.

3.50: 1. HAY DANCE (N Williamson) 5-2 fav; 2. Bietschhorn Bard 3-1; 3. Sallep 4-1. 8 ran. ½, 9. (P Hobbs, Minehead). Tote: £2.50; £2.00, £1.10, £1.60. DF: £8.30. CSF: £11.64. Tricast: £28.06.

Jackpot: Not won; £2,965.07 carried forward to Ascot today.

Placepot: £120.00. Quadpot: £22.10.
Place 6: £82.78. Place 5: £26.28.

LINGFIELD

11.45: 1. KEDWICK (A McGlone) 5-1; 2. Sapphire Son 20-1; dead-heat 3. Bakers Daughter 7-1 & Manabar 12-1. 14 ran. 3-1 fav Harlequin Walk (6th). 3, 1½. (P Hedger). Tote: £6.00; £2.40, £14.90, Manabar £1.30, Bakers Daughter £0.60. DF: £29.30. CSF: £90.88. Tricast: Kedwick, Sapphire Son, Manabar £529.45, Kedwick, Sapphire Son, Bakers Daughter £326.56. Trio: combination of 2-4-8 not won; £107.50 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today; combination 1-4-8 £43.60; £107.50 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today.

12.15: 1. ZIMIRI (S Sanders) 5-1; 2. Night Sceptre 4-6 fav; 3. Hever Golf Mover 11-2. 10 ran. Hd, 1½. (J Toller). Tote: £6.50; £1.50, £1.30, £1.30. DF: £5.40. CSF: £9.06. Trio: £10.70.

12.45: 1. ZUNO FLYER (Mrs A Perrett) 16-1; 2. Stalled 9-2; 3. Zahid 100-30 fav. 12 ran. Sh-hd, 1. (A Moore). Tote: £32.30; £7.10, £1.40, £1.60. DF: £67.10. CSF: £82.28. Trio: £114.40.

1.15: 1. HEAVENLY MISS (S Sanders) 8-1; 2. Melbourne Princess 11-4; 3. Threeplay 9-4 jt fav. 5 ran. 9-4 jt fav Eager To Please (4th). 2, 1¾. (J Bridger). Tote: £5.80; £2.10, £1.70. DF: £18.80. CSF: £27.55. NR: Figua.

1.45: 1. BOLD EFFORT (W Ryan) 10-1; 2. Step On Degas 11-1; 3. Sharp Imp 20-1. 14 ran. 4-1 fav Myjas. 1¼, nk. (K Cunningham-Brown). Tote: £12.30; £4.20, £2.30, £3.20. DF: £42.40. CSF: £103.24. Tricast: £1,220.12. Trio: £128.60.

2.15: 1. FATHER DAN (D Holland) 4-1; 2. Ben Bunn 16-1; 3. Shanghai Lil 8-1. 14 ran. 3-1 fav Absolutelystunning. Hd, 1½. (Miss Gay Kelleway). Tote: £3.50; £1.70, £3.30, £2.90. DF: £16.30. CSF: £64.52. Tricast: £489.42. Trio: £71.70.

2.45: 1. FEATHER BED (D R McCabe) 100-30; 2. Around Fore Alliss 8-1; 3. Lochlass 5-1. 10 ran. 5-2 fav Rotley Spinney. 1, ¾. (M Jarvis). Tote: £3.90; £2.10, £3.20, £1.80. DF: £31.70. CSF: £31.27. Trio: £45.60.

3.15: 1. SPEEDY CLASSIC (A Clark) 12-1; 2. Never Think Twice 12-1; 3. Barbason 16-1. 15 ran. 5-1 jt favs Milos, Star Talent (5th). 4, ½. (M Heaton-Ellis). Tote: £19.50; £7.00, £4.60, £7.60. DF: £107.10. CSF: £148.25. Tricast: £2,195.74. Trio: Not won; £622.41 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today. NR: Purple Fling.

Placepot: £338.10. Quadpot: £23.90.
Place 6: £404.73. Place 5: £157.90.

HEXHAM

12.30: 1. QATTARA (G Cahill) 6-1; 2. Elastic 16-1; 3. Fassan 1-2 fav. 11 ran. 6, 2. (W McKeown). Tote: £8.50; £2.20, £3.90, £1.00. DF: £33.50. CSF: £93.70. Trio: £44.40; £56.39 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today. NR: Dena Point, Mafiun.

1.00: 1. PAPERISING (A Dobbin) 3-1; 2. Swanbister 5-4 fav; 3. Boston Man 33-1. 15 ran. ¾, 2½. (G Richards). Tote: £3.30; £2.70, £1.10, £32.90. DF: £3.50. CSF: £8.06. NR: Pebble Beach.

1.30: 1. LIEN DE FAMILLE (P Niven) 4-1; 2. Celtic Giant 4-5 fav; 3. Sireric 16-1. 6 ran. 5, 3½. (J Quinn). Tote: £4.50; £2.40, £1.10. DF: £5.10. CSF: £7.76. Trio: £53.90; £30.41 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today. NR: Bold Account, Five Flags, World Without End.

2.00: 1. BRUMON (D J Moffatt) 14-1; 2. Kemo Sabo 6-4 fav; 3. Here Comes Herbie 9-2. 7 ran. 5, 13. (D Moffatt). Tote: £14.20; £3.80, £2.80. DF: £13.10. CSF: £32.80. Tricast: £90.74. NR: Innocent George.

2.30: 1. PRECIPICE RUN (G Cahill) 16-1; 2. Yacht Club 8-1; 3. Corbleu 5-1. 9 ran. 5-2 fav Blanc Seing. ¾, 2. (J Barker). Tote: £25.80; £3.50, £3.00, £1.60. DF: £22.80. CSF: £126.95. Tricast: £680.85. Trio: £107.10; £34.71 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today. NR: Tough Character.

3.00: 1. OFF THE BRU (Mr M Bradburne) 8-1; 2. Gale Water 7-1; 3. Road By The River 3-1. 7 ran. 11-8 fav Westwell Boy. 8, 14. (Mrs S Bradburne). Tote: £8.40; £3.30, £1.60. DF: £22.90. CSF: £43.27. Tricast: £138.85. NR: Hurricane Andrew.

3.30: 1. BOBBY GRANT (P Niven) 9-1; 2. Magpie Melody 5-1; 3. Roman Outlaw 16-1. 18 ran. 9-4 fav First Light. 2½, 1. (C Grant). Tote: £11.30; £3.80, £1.80, £10.90. DF: £34.90. CSF: £60.66. Trio: £135.70; £114.71 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today. NR: Royal Spruce.

Placepot: £42.90. Quadpot: £37.50.
Place 6: £72.45. Place 5: £56.90.

UTTOXETER

1.10: 1. TEJANO GOLD (R Dunwoody) 9-2; 2. Master Tribe 10-1; 3. Most Equal 3-1. 7 ran. 11-4 fav Saint Ciel (6th). 5, 1½. (P Bradley, Stoke-on-Trent). Tote: £5.40; £2.30, £3.80. DF: £13.90. CSF: £38.34. Tricast: £116.43. NR: Albemine.

1.40: 1. OBAN (G Bradley) 100-30 fav; 2. Sunset And Vine 4-1; 3. Major Look 14-1. 7 ran. 6, 5. (Miss H Knight, Wantage). Tote: £3.40; £1.70, £2.00. DF: £3.60. CSF: £15.80.

2.10: 1. STONECUTTER (R Hughes) 9-4 fav; 2. Boy Blakeney 7-1; 3. How Could-I 6-1. 14 ran. Nk, 12. (M Channon, Upper Lambourn). Tote: £2.40; £1.10, £3.50, £3.20. DF: £13.80. CSF: £18.82. Trio: £87.00. NR: Nantgarw, Northern Diamond.

2.40: 1. SUPER TACTICS (P Henley) 9-2; 2. Mister Oddy 5-4 fav; 3. Native Mission 3-1. 4 ran. 3, 1¼. (R Alner, Blandford Forum). Tote: £6.00. DF: £3.20. CSF: £10.10.

3.10: 1. COVERDALE LANE (Mr P Murray) 9-2; 2. Majors Legacy 8-1; 3. Be Brave 33-1. 12 ran. 5-2 fav Ocean Leader (5th). 6, 1½. (Mrs S Smith, Bingley). Tote: £4.20; £2.00, £2.00, £7.80. DF: £17.70. CSF: £34.55. Tricast: £891.54. Trio: £135.80; £135.82 carried forward to Uttoxeter 1.30 today.

3.40: 1. AGISTMENT (R Dunwoody) 5-2; 2. Mighty Moss 4-6 fav; 3. Barton Ward 25-1. 13 ran. ½, 6. (J FitzGerald, Malton). Tote: £3.10; £1.40, £1.00, £3.50. DF: £1.30. CSF: £4.57. Trio: £7.70. NR: Beggars Banquet, Market Mayhem.

Placepot: £217.90. Quadpot: £17.90.
Place 6: £298.84. Place 5: £61.88.

THE INDEPENDENT
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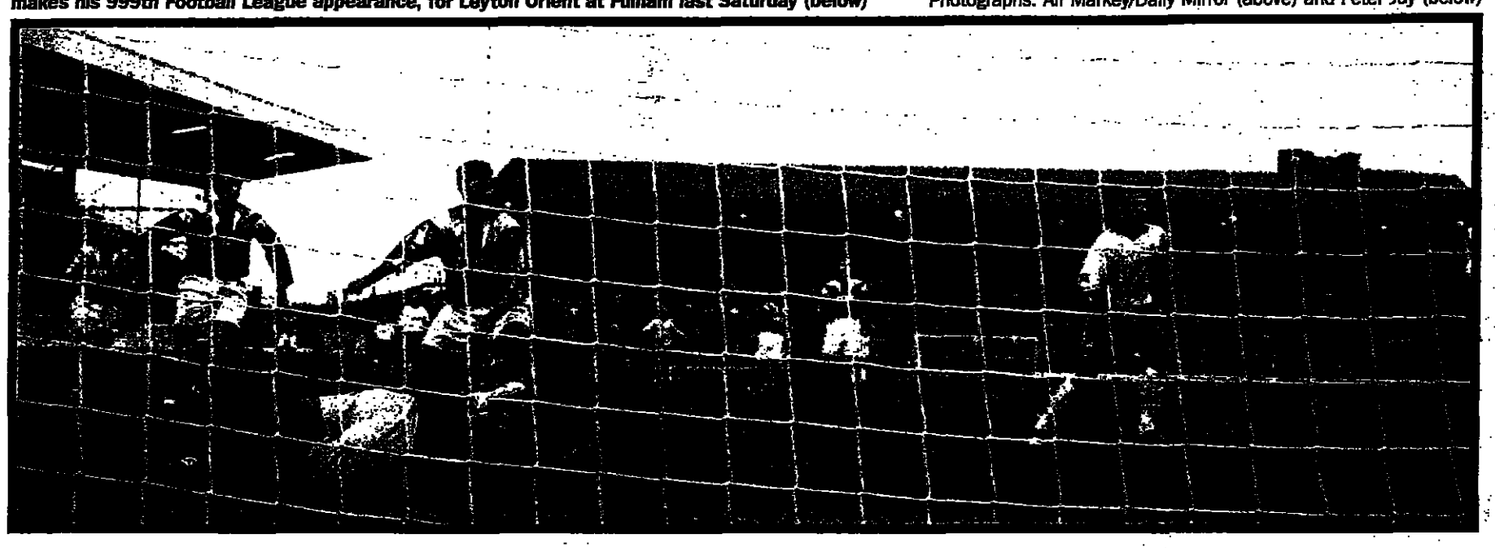
sport

The difference 1,000 games can make

In May 1966 a 16-year-old goalkeeper made his debut for Leicester City. Tomorrow Peter Shilton becomes the first footballer to make 1,000 League appearances. Glenn Moore talks to those who have played with and against him, and assesses how football has changed during one man's remarkable career

Two legends and one ball: Peter Shilton (left) and Gordon Banks, both of Stoke City and England, in a 1974 training session (above). Twenty-two years later Shilton makes his 999th Football League appearance, for Leyton Orient at Fulham last Saturday (below) *Photographs: Alf Markey/Daily Mirror (above) and Peter Jay (below)*



There was something odd about seeing Peter Shilton keeping goal for Leyton Orient at Craven Cottage on Saturday. It was not just the setting. Fulham's ground is grand by Third Division standards and, many years ago, Shilton played there in the old First Division.

It was not his game. He made one stunning save, several good ones and was only beaten by a very fine goal. He concentrated, he pointed and, each time a Fulham forward got through, he would bellow at his defenders. Still barking after all these years.

It was his size. He looked smaller than remembered, whether hunched in his goal or patrolling the penalty area. Maybe, at 47, there is some natural shrinkage but it is more a case that, even in the simplest things, the game has changed beyond recognition since Shilton came into it.

It was May 1966, two months before England won the World Cup, when Shilton made his League debut. Manfred Mann were top of the charts, the transfer record stood at £115,000 (for Denis Law), Northampton were in the old First Division. Wimbledon were playing Folkestone in the Southern League.

Shilton, then a 16-year-old schoolboy international, played for Leicester City against Everton. He stood in for Gordon Banks, who was on England duty, and kept a clean sheet. Two years later he had replaced Banks in the Leicester team permanently.

It seems strange now, with Steve Ogrizovic, Ludek Miklosko and Peter Schmeichel bestriding the Premiership, but, at just over six foot with a heavily developed upper body, some regarded Shilton as big for a top goalkeeper.

Goalkeeping was a different art then. The balls, though no longer the sodden leathers of yore, moved differently. Poor floodlighting made some night matches difficult while pitches were often rutted or glutinous. The shoulder charges which put goalkeeper and ball into the net together had disappeared but a new practice of packing the box with bodies, preventing the goalkeeper reaching the ball, was replacing it.

Goalkeepers were changing from shot-stoppers to being part of the team. Liverpool's Tommy Lawrence was one of the first to act as auxiliary sweeper. Shilton was quick to adapt. His dedication to his craft was total.

"He was a self-made goalkeeper, not a natural like Pat Jennings," Bob Wilson said. "He called his book 'The Magnificent Obsession' and he has been obsessed with goalkeeping and being the best since day one." Shilton was strong but agile, with a draughtsman's command of angles and an enormous presence. "He was Schmeichel before Schmeichel," Wilson added. "He would always do things to look different, to look big, like wearing the white jersey.

"He could be physically intimidating to forwards and he bollocked everybody. Like Schmeichel he did not admit to a bad goal."

Football was so different then. *Shoot!* magazine, the granddaddy of the genre, did not exist, *Match of the Day* was in its infancy and radio commentaries were rare.

Players were often paid in cash, weekly, and lived in modest homes. Money was beginning to flood into the game, encouraged by the twin attractions of George Best and the World Cup win, but it took time for football's new glamour to spread from London and Manchester to the smaller cities.

By the time it did, Shilton was an England international and he was catching on. Jon Holmes, one of the first and most enduring of agents, is Leicester-based and he negotiated Shilton's 1974 move to Stoke City. "That had not been done too much at the time," Holmes has recalled. "Stoke were a bit surprised and I think they thought our approach was more commercial than anything they had encountered before."

Three years later he joined Nottingham Forest – despite Stoke City's chairman telling Brian Clough: "You do realise he'll put you in the workhouse. He's earning a fortune and he'll want at least a 10 per cent pay rise."

Rumour has it that Shilton actually took a cut in pay, though it was to be quickly topped up with bonuses. The move was long overdue. Shilton was almost 28, he had won 23 England caps – and a Second Division championship medal. He had been relegated twice and only finished in the top eight once in a decade of regular first-team football.

In medal terms he was underachieving. His best season had been with Stoke in 1975. Top in February, they finished fifth. Alan Hudson, the team's fulcrum, has since blamed Shilton's "posturing" for their decline.

It is hard to imagine an England No 1 now joining a club like Stoke were then. A modern equivalent might be Leicester – but then think of Ravanelli and Juninho at Middlesbrough. Money talks.

Arsenal, in the approach to the Double year, had been interested but were swayed by the form of Bob Wilson. Clough, when at Leeds, had wanted to buy Shilton but been sacked first. Manchester United, under Dave Sexton, had wanted to buy him but had been put off by his wages – and, maybe, by his rejection of Sir Matt Busby's offer of schoolboy terms at 14.

Forest seemed no bigger than Stoke when Shilton joined. They had just been promoted. They were instant champions – with Shilton as PFA Footballer of the Year – and followed up with successive European Cups.

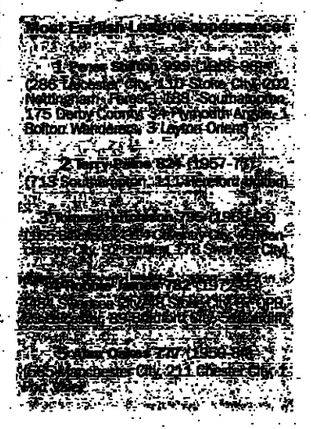
The title was clinched by arguably Shilton's greatest save, from Mike Ferguson of Coventry. The second European crown saw possibly his best match as Kevin Keegan and Hamburg were defied.

Then, while still England goalkeeper, he made another apparently curious move, to Southampton. There was one bravura season, when Southampton finished second and reached the FA Cup semi-final, but the honours dried up.

He moved on to Derby, where he was still reputed to be earning £250,000 in his 40th year. Derby were relegated and Shilton went to Plymouth as player-manager. One relegation was already in train and, after failing in the play-offs two seasons later, he was sacked as Argyle slid towards further demotion.

By now the money problems were in the open. John McGovern, a former Forest team-mate, had walked out over an unpaid personal loan, the Argyle chairman, Dan McCauley, alleged he owed £50,000 in back taxes, Martin Pipe, the racehorse trainer, sued over unpaid bills, and one of his houses was repossessed.

There have also been marital problems and problems with the bottle – one distinguished former international recalled the aftermath of England's 1984 match in



Paris. "Platini had scored from a free-kick and I think he blamed himself. The next day at the airport he was clearly not of this world. He was always a drinker, two to three days if he was badly upset by a defeat. He took it personally. But two days later he would be training until he dropped."

Shilton has since traipsed the clubs, coaching here, acting as goalkeeping cover there. He did play twice, for Bolton, but, by a statistical quirk, only one game counts in the record books. The other was in the play-offs. If that had counted, the game with Fulham would have been his 1,000th.

After that match he said he was still adapting to the lower divisions. "At a higher level you can read things, here you have to react to situations more." The back-pass rule also appeared a problem. Shilton added this week: "It is completely different now. The pace of the game has changed. It is a lot quicker from end to end. You can be attacking, two passes later the opposition are having a shot."

Tomorrow's game will be his 1,384th first-class match. He clearly enjoyed last week's match but, as Wilson said: "He will always be regarded as one of the great goalkeepers. He shouldn't have to think where his next meal is coming from."

No 197 Workington

FAN'S EYE VIEW

by David Goodall

There is something unique about the innocence of childhood and the *naïveté* of early adolescence that provides you with a "taken for granted" view of the world. There were 92 teams in the Football League – and Workington were one of them.

It was special – it gave you a sense of identity when trying to explain where you came from. If you were into football, it was natural to assume that all other sane humans were as well, so you said: "I'm from Workington, you know. Division Three" but more usually "Four." My relationship with the Reds started sometime in the 1957-58 season when, as a nine-year-old, I became aware that adults kicked a ball seriously and that the ground was quite near to my home.

At that time I was neither aware of history, nor the scope of the game beyond my immediate reality. The cost of such immaturity meant that I missed the famous FA Cup third-round tie in January 1958 when "we" were knocked out by the "Busby Babes" in one of the last games they played before Munich.

As the 60s and adolescence arrived, history and context began to take a greater hold on our lives. Shankly had been our manager and we had missed it, but the stories sounded good when told by our elders. Then there had been Joe Harvey, who was allowed to leave to take over at Newcastle. We had drifted from the Third Division North to the Fourth Division, and I had become aware of the process of re-election. In that time I saw the demise of Gateshead, Accrington Stanley, Bradford Park Avenue and then, nearer to home, Barrow. Life was now not so simple, innocent or straightforward.

In the summer of 1963 the club appointed a new player-manager, and there were a number of new signings. Little did we realise that Ken Furphy would produce a team that not only would give us promotion to the Third Division, but for a short time would threaten to win that league.

Furphy gave me my adolescent heroes, names that can still flavour conversations in pubs with friends when I got home. He gave us dreams of greatness, dreams that were stolen by arch rivals Carlisle and a disputed Kit Napier goal in a Christmas derby that was disallowed because he hit it so hard it rebounded off the back stanchion.

Furphy was attracted to Watford, pre Elton John, and took some of the stars with him. We returned to our roots in the Fourth Division. I left for higher education in 1968 to Manchester at its football best – but I was often to be found following my heart in places such as Stockport and Rochdale.

After graduation I found myself working in Oxford, so my relationship was maintained via the local weekly paper sent by my parents and carefully chosen visits home for holidays. The 1970s were bad times – each September promised a new opportunity, but the quality of the team appeared to get worse.

The last time that I saw them in that élite group of 92 was in the latter part of the 1976-77 season. I was in my Hertford period, so the nearest game was Cambridge. They went on to win the division that season, so we were just another home win for them, 4-1. A spirited performance from a team that was not good enough... but there was always next season!

But this time there wasn't. We only applied for re-election seven times, there are 12 teams who matched that number or beat it, eight of whom are still in the "club." We went – and in came Wimbledon.

The trauma is still with us, even after 19 seasons. We missed the opportunities now offered by the GM Vauxhall Conference, plummeting to the lower levels of the Northern Premier League. A ground that once held 21,000 is now capped at 2,500, with the grandstand losing its roof as a consequence of Taylor. But they are still my team.

I now live in Liverpool and my nine-year-old son supports the local "Reds." However, he joins his dad to visit exotic places such as Warrington, Witton Albion, Curzon Ashton, Eastwood Town and other welcoming grounds. Several weeks ago we had a weekend in Workington. He did what I always wanted to and was mascot for the home game with Worksop Town, watched by his grandad. Happy dreams...

MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES AND POOLS CHECK

TODAY

3.0 unless stated

FA Carling Premiership

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	18	11	4	3	35	17	37
Arsenal	17	10	5	2	34	16	35
Wimbledon	17	10	4	3	30	17	34
Newcastle	17	9	3	5	27	19	30
Aston Villa	17	9	3	5	22	15	30
Man Utd	17	7	7	3	32	25	28
Everton	17	7	6	4	26	20	27
Chelsea	17	6	7	4	25	26	25
Sheff Wed	17	6	7	4	18	19	25
Tottenham	17	7	3	7	17	17	24
Derby	17	5	7	5	19	20	22
Leicester	17	6	3	8	17	22	21
Leeds	17	6	3	8	15	20	21
Sunderland	17	5	5	7	17	21	20
West Ham	17	4	6	7	15	22	18
Middlesbrough	18	3	6	9	21	33	15
Blackburn	17	2	7	8	16	22	13
Southampton	17	3	4	10	24	32	13
Coventry	17	2	7	8	12	24	13
Nottm Forest	17	1	7	9	14	29	10

1 Postponed: Blackburn v Middlesbro..
2 Chelsea v West Ham
3 Everton v Leeds
4 Leicester v Coventry
5 Manchester Utd v Sunderland
6 Nottingham Forest v Arsenal
7 Southampton v Derby
8 Tottenham v Sheffield Wednesday

Nationwide League First Division

9 Crystal Palace v Charlton
10 Grimsby v Bradford City
11 Huddersfield v QPR
12 Ipswich v Stoke
13 Oldham v Manchester City
14 Port Vale v Norwich
15 Reading v Portsmouth
16 Sheffield Utd v Barnsley
17 Tranmere v Wolves
18 West Bromwich v Oxford Utd

Second Division

19 Blackpool v York
20 Brentford v Preston
21 Bristol Rovers v Wycombe
22 Bury v Stockport
23 Chesterfield v Bournemouth
24 Rotherham v Plymouth
25 Watford v Gillingham
26 Wrexham v Bristol City

Third Division

27 Barnet v Chester
28 Cardiff v Mansfield
29 Carlisle v Scunthorpe
30 Darlington v Torquay
31 Exeter v Swansea
32 Hartlepool v Lincoln
33 Hull v Doncaster
34 Scarborough v Fulham
35 Wigan v Rochdale

GM Vauxhall Conference

36 Bath v Stevenage
37 Bromsgrove v Farnborough
38 Dover v Stalybridge
– Hayes v Kettering
– Hednesford v Gateshead
– Macclesfield v Telford
– Morecambe v Altrincham
– Rushden v Kidderminster
– Woking v Halifax

Bell's Scottish League Premier Division

39 Celtic v Dundee Utd
40 Hearts v Rangers
41 Kilmarnock v Aberdeen
42 Motherwell v Dunfermline
43 Raith v Hibernian

First Division

– Clydebank v East Fife
44 Stirling v Airdrie

Second Division

45 Clyde v Berwick
– Livingston v Queen of the South
46 Stenhousemuir v Brechin

Third Division

– Albion Rovers v Ross County
47 Inverness Cal Thistle v Cowdenbeath
48 Montrose v Alloa
49 Queen's Park v East Stirling

TOMORROW

FA Carling Premiership

Aston Villa v Wimbledon (2.0)

Nationwide League First Division

Swindon v Bolton (2.10)

Third Division

Leyton Orient v Brighton (12.30)

TEAM SHEET

Chelsea v West Ham

Last season: 1-2
Last five League matches: Chelsea DDLDL, West Ham DDDLD

Petrescu, Hughes and Di Matteo are all expected to return to Chelsea's starting line-up but Vialli is injured while Lebouef and Wise are suspended. West Ham's Dowie has a broken ankle and will be out of action for 12 weeks.

Everton v Leeds

Last season: 2-0
Last five League matches: Everton DWLDW, Leeds LWWDD

Everton midfielder Grant has missed training this week with an ankle injury but should be fit. If not, Stuart stands by. Leeds have Sharpe battling to recover from groin and calf injuries while Yeboah and Wallace will be on the bench.

Leicester v Coventry

Last season: Did not play
Last five League matches: Leicester WLLWD, Coventry DLLLW

Prior and the Swede, Kamark, may feature in Leicester's defence as Walsh and Whitlow have been ruled out, while Claridge (ribs) and Izzet (virus) are doubtful. Coventry await fitness checks on McAllister (ankle) and Whelan (heavy cold).

Manchester Utd v Sunderland

Last season: Did not play
Last five League matches: Manchester Utd WDWDD, Sunderland LDWLW

United are likely to keep the team which started the 1-1 midweek draw at Sheffield Wednesday. For Sunderland, Stewart has completed a three-match ban but, with Ball and Gray having recovered from minor knocks, he is unlikely to start.

Notts Forest v Arsenal

Last season: 0-1
Last five League matches: Nottingham Forest LDLDL, Arsenal LWWWD

Garde gets his first Premiership start in place of fellow Frenchman Vieira. Bergkamp and Keown return after injuries but Adams is serving a one-match ban. Dixon (ankle) is out so McGowan may start. Forest loan signing Clough is unlikely to play.

Southampton v Derby

Last season: Did not play
Last five League matches: Southampton LLLLL, Derby WDWDL

Le Tissier is still out for the Saints while Dodd is out until the new year after a cartilage operation. Van Gobbel is suspended so Monkou returns in defence. Derby have several players suffering from flu so they delay naming a squad.

Tottenham v Sheff Wed

Last season: 1-0
Last five League matches: Tottenham WLLWD, Sheffield Wednesday WDDWD

Iversen is a certain starter alongside Sheringham up front for Spurs, with Armstrong facing six weeks out after an ankle operation. Wednesday's Carbone suffered a groin injury in midweek and faces a fitness test while Hyde (hamstring) is doubtful.

TOMORROW...

Aston Villa v Wimbledon

Last season: 2-0. **Last five League matches:** Aston Villa LWWWW, Wimbledon DDWWW

Villa goalkeeper Bosnich is in line for only his fifth appearance of the season while Taylor, Tiler, Nelson, Joachim and Johnson have all recovered from illness. The Wimbledon captain Jones is set to return in place of Fear after being on international duty last weekend for Wales. Holdsworth, scorer of the winner against Blackburn, is again expected to be on the substitutes' bench.

هكذا من الاصل

Laws decree that strikers will return to haunt their old clubs and certain teams will come a cropper against their bogey team

OLIVIA BLAIR

While the laws of the game are subject to constant scrutiny and tinkering, football's unwritten laws tend to stand the test of time. Those laws, which you won't find in the most archaic and long-winded Football Association rule books, decree, for example, that strikers always return to haunt their old clubs (witness Darren Huckerby and Stan Collymore against Newcastle and Forest): that certain strikers will always score against certain clubs (Alan Shearer's goal against Coventry was his 11th, the most damage he's inflicted on any one team), and that certain teams always come a cropper against the most feared opponents – their bogey team.

So West Ham really did not stand a chance at Edgeley Park on Wednesday night. It wasn't just the pouring rain, the long journey and Iain Dowie's errant sense of direction, nor the knowledge that the last time the two clubs met in the Cup, in 1972, County had won 2-1; but rather that Stockport have become something of a Coca-Cola bogey team for Premiership clubs. Having taken Everton to the wire last season, they beat Blackburn at Ewood Park (sealing Ray Harford's fate) before taking West Ham's scalp. "Brett is County's Angell – now he faces the Saints", the headlines noted. It will take a betting man to bank on Graeme Souness' side bringing Angell and his teammates back down to earth.

Most teams, at one time or another, will admit to a bogey team. Since Stockport's – Aldershot Town – are in the First Division of the Icis Football League, the teams are unlikely to meet barring a Cup exploit of Stockport-like proportions. Up until the Shots dropped out of the Football League in 1992, neither Stockport (nor Crewe for that matter) had ever managed to beat the Surrey side at the Recreation Ground.

As for the Hammers, they may not be a bogey team in the true sense of the word, but they can claim to have put the wind up one of the biggest sails of them all. After the Hammers' obstinacy in the final game of 1994/95 against Manchester United had ensured the championship went to Ewood Park, there was a certain inevitability about the way fortune came out of its hiding place to give West Ham a 2-2 draw against United two Sundays ago. Anywhere other than Upton Park would surely have witnessed a different script.

Arsenal fans will tell you that Luton are something of their bogey team, but Luton's local rivals, Watford, are arguably more so. Although two divisions now separate them, of the 13 League and Cup games they played while Watford were in the top flight, Arsenal won just three. In the 1985/86 season the Hornets did the double over the Gunners on consecutive days then repeated the feat two seasons later despite getting relegated.

However, the game that most Watford fans remember is the stormy 1987 FA Cup quarter-final at Highbury when Arsenal claimed that remarks by the Watford manager, Graham Taylor, before the game had turned the referee in the Hornets' favour; a claim that gathered momentum when, in the last minute with Watford leading 2-1, every Gunner stopped to appeal for a penalty, the ref waved play on and Luther Blissett ran the length of the field to score. To rub salt into Arsenal's wound, Watford's opponents in the semi-finals were Spurs.

But Watford would no doubt swap one of those wins for one against their bogey team, Luton, who they have not beaten since 1986/87. Arsenal themselves have found Spurs something of a bogey team at Highbury in recent years; Gerry Francis was tempting fate in admitting before the November derby that he had never lost to Arsenal. The Gunners duly won 3-1, the first time they had won there since December 1991.

Spurs' real bogey team is Aston Villa, who they haven't beaten since September 1990, but it's Villa's Midlands rivalry with Coventry which boasts the longest-running feud: Coventry's victory at Highfield Road in November 1988 ended a sequence of 26 games, 51 years and 17 managers without a Sky Blues win.

These unwritten laws seldom have any foundation; they're simply quirks of fate which embroider the fabric of the game. But psychologist George Sik believes it's all down to the locus of control. Eh? "Well, if players perceive their destiny to be out of their hands and down to Lady Luck, the manager, manipulative developers or even grey shirts, they'll start thinking 'We're fated not to beat them', and subconsciously stop trying," Sik says.

It's hard to imagine quite what external locus of control Hibs blamed over the 22 games, five years, seven months and 23 days they failed to beat Edinburgh rivals Hearts, but easier to imagine how the relief when they ended that run, on 27 August 1994, reduced skipper Gordon Hunter, a lifelong Hibs fan, to tears.

Incidentally, Sunderland's bogey team at Roker Park in the early 1990s was Southend. Frustrated at having lost four times in five meetings between 1991-94, the Rokerites took drastic action. In April 1995 they spent £600,000 in removing from Roots Hall the root cause of the trouble – the striker who had scored every time he played them. Unfortunately, said striker was soon on his way out of Roker having made just 10 appearances and failed to score. His name? Brett Angell.

Holiday presents risk and chance for United

Clive White on a potentially decisive weekend for Premiership contenders

Manchester United were rumoured yesterday to be interested in signing Stefan Schwarz from Fiorentina for £7m. But should results go awry for them today it will take more than overpriced Arsenal "rejects" – eventually dependable midfield workhorse like the Swede – for the champions to go galloping after those thoroughbred Gunners come the end of this holiday period.

The match at Old Trafford against combative Sunderland is one which Alex Ferguson's side will almost certainly have to win if they are to stay roughly in touch with Arsène Wenger's team, who, providing they can accommodate the loss through suspension of Tony Adams and Patrick Vieira, should regain the leadership of the Premiership at bottom of the table Nottingham Forest. If they do (and much could depend on how effectively the Frenchman Remi Garde deputises for his inspirational fellow countryman Vieira) they can reasonably anticipate maximum points from the remainder of their games up to and including New Year's Day.

United's four fixtures till then look similarly favourable although they will have to get back to winning ways quite sharpishly after three draws in four games.

"Normally we have our dodgy spell over Christmas," Peter Schmeichel, their Danish international goalkeeper, said. "Last year we had a terrible Christmas but we still went on to win the Double. But we have had too many bad results this season to be able to afford a bad Christmas this time, so we have got to put things right and win the games over the festive season. I believe that if we manage to put a good run together like we have had every year then we will go on and win it again."

At the moment United are lagging nine points behind the leaders, Liverpool, who have played one more game. Last Christmas Eve they stood 10 points behind Newcastle United and we all know how that pursuit turned out.

Last Christmas United got just what they wanted – a home win over Newcastle. This time Ferguson will be praying – perhaps for the only time in the last couple of seasons – that Kevin Keegan's troubled side pull off a win, against Liverpool at St James' Park on Monday, a meeting which at Anfield last season precipitated the Geordies' downfall. With Aston Villa receiving their Coca-Cola Cup conquerors, the unbeatable Dons, tomorrow, the Saturday programme has been robbed of four of the top five clubs. Villa look well-placed for a spot of revenge over Wimbledon, whose 19th match without defeat last week against Blackburn showed signs of fatigue.

That said, a fiercely demanding run of fixtures over the next couple of weeks could bring Villa's challenge to its knees, with Everton easily the best placed to claim their top-six position.

Avoiding defeat will again be the object of the exercise for Leeds at Goodison Park. The manner in which George Graham's side has chiselled 11 points out of the last 18 has made his old Arsenal look positively gung-ho by comparison. But should he deem to bring the Ghanaian Tony Yeboah off the bench – the pair having settled their differences – for his first senior game in eight months, Yorkshiremen may be reminded that it was not all drudgery under Howard Wilkinson.

Gavin Meadows prepares to dip his toe in the water in the 200 metres freestyle final at the British Championships in Sheffield yesterday Photograph: David Ashdown

Another Hickman record

Swimming

James Hickman continued his record-breaking at the British Championships in Sheffield yesterday, when he broke his own British record for the second time in the 24 hours to win the 100 metres butterfly gold.

The 20-year-old, who improved his 10-month-old best by a quarter of a second on Thursday, lowered the record by another 0.3sec yesterday. He clocked 53.03sec, finishing nearly a second ahead of the Ukrainian Pavlo Khnykin.

Leeds' Claire Huddart beat the former world short-course champion Karen Pickering to take the women's 200m freestyle. The 24-year-old won in 2:00.06, only 0.03sec ahead of Pickering, to win her first winter title after finishing second and third in recent years.

Earlier, Ian Wilson had created a piece of history by being crowned the first British Swimming Champion in the renamed tournament. Wilson, in fact, captured his seventh winter title in the 1500m freestyle. The City of Leeds swimmer took advantage of the absence of the Olympic bronze medallist Graeme Smith, who withdrew after the heats to concentrate on the 200m final, by lapping all the other finalists.

Wilson, 26 yesterday, finished more than two lengths of the 25-metre pool and nearly 40 seconds ahead Glenn Hudson of Portsmouth in 14min 47.73sec.

Charlotte Niblett celebrated her 19th birthday by taking 3.5sec off her own Welsh record to win the women's 400m individual medley gold.

Andrew Clayton, the defending champion, was also in record-breaking mood as he overshadowed the Olympic medal pair, Graeme Smith and Paul Palmer, in the 200m freestyle. Clayton beat the five-year-old British record of Paul Howe by just one-hundredth of a second to win in 1:46.70 with Mark Stevens second, and Gavin Meadows third.

Room at the top for Yorkshire derby winner

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

There will be more than just Yorkshire pride at stake this afternoon when Sheffield United and Barnsley meet in the Nationwide League. With the First Division leaders playing Swindon tomorrow, the prize for the winner at Bramall Lane will be a place at the top of the table.

Sheffield United, second only because of Bolton's superior goalscoring, have lost just twice in their last 15 matches, and their victory at Crystal Palace in midweek restored their feelgood factor, which had been undermined by mounting injuries and suspensions and last Saturday's 4-1 defeat at Oxford.

Sheffield United will be without eight players this time, although Don Hutchison returns after suspension.

Their manager, Howard Kendall, said: "The way both teams are playing sets it up as a great local derby, and it should be a tremendous atmosphere. Hopefully the way we battled at Palace means the fans will forgive us for last Saturday's display at Oxford."

Barnsley will be backed by 5,500 fans, with a crowd of around 25,000 expected to watch a potentially intriguing contest. Their manager, Danny Wilson, will be demanding his team improve on an away record that has brought only one victory in seven matches, even though they have lost only once in their last 14 games. He is likely to stand by the squad who beat Tranmere 3-0 last week.

Smith merely content with half-term progress

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

Today Rangers reach the halfway stage in their pursuit of a ninth consecutive Scottish League titles, with their manager, Walter Smith, marking his half-term report "reasonable."

Rangers, desperate to equal the record of nine consecutive titles set by Celtic under the late Jock Stein, are 12 points clear of Aberdeen at the top. But Smith only regards the advantage as five points – what their lead would be if Celtic were to win their three games in hand against Kilmarnock, Raith Rovers and Dunfermline.

Today Rangers face Hearts at Tynecastle Park and victory would give Smith a happy Christmas. "We have made a reasonable start, no better than that," he said. Ally McCoist is fit and is eager for a recall to the Rangers front line. Hearts have five players doubtful, while Pasquale Bruno is suspended.

Celtic's Dutch striker Pierre van Hooijdonk, a target for Feyenoord, has a groin strain and is doubtful for the home game against Dundee United, who have put the former Bolton forward Owen Coyle on the transfer list. Aberdeen visit Kilmarnock, where Bobby Williamson continues as caretaker manager amid rumours that Mark Hateley is heading for Rugby Park as player-manager.

Falkirk have sacked their manager Eamonn Bannon – a day after the club was fined £25,000 by the Scottish League for fielding an ineligible player.

SPORTING DIGEST

Delay helps Alphand to overtake Killy

Skiing

Luc Alphand, relaxed after bad weather gave him an unexpected lie-in, became the most successful French downhiller in World Cup history with his country's first Val Gardena win yesterday.

Alphand, who started 17th in a delayed and shortened race, clocked 1min 53.10sec for the seventh downhill win of his World Cup career, Jean-Claude Killy won six. "Yesterday I saw that France had never won here. I thought it was about time," he said.

Norway's Atle Skaardal was second in 1:53.25 and the Italian Kristian Ghedina delighted the locals by finishing third.

The Austrians, who have dominated the World Cup this season by taking the top four in the opening downhill in Val d'Isère last Sunday and sweeping the leading places in training in France and Italy, failed to make any sort of impression. Their best finisher was Werner Franz, who was seventh, one place ahead of compatriot Fritz Strobl who won in Val d'Isère.

Yesterday's race was originally scheduled for Whistler Mountain in Canada earlier this month but was postponed because of heavy snow. It looked like it would have to be put off again when the organisers delayed the start for an hour as clouds shrouded the mountain top and snow fell steadily.

Becker's tax payments 'under investigation'

Tennis

The German tax authorities declined to comment yesterday on a newspaper report that tax inspectors had searched Boris Becker's home and removed several documents.

The daily newspaper *Bild* said four tax inspectors had arrived at Becker's house in Munich on Thursday morning with a search warrant. They were admitted to the house, although Becker was on holiday in Florida, the paper said.

Munich tax authorities said they never commented on measures undertaken as part of their investigations, and Becker's Munich-based manager was unavailable for comment.

Bild said the investigators were probing the period between 1990 and 1993, when Becker lived in Monte Carlo.

The report was published on the same day as a television station released extracts of an interview with Becker, in which he indicated he would leave Germany when his three-year-old son was of school age to allow him to lead a more normal life.

"My son Noah won't go to school in Germany," Becker said. He added that a move was not imminent, saying: "I'll pay my taxes in Germany next year."

Germany has seen a series of high-profile tax cases involving well-known personalities over the past couple of years. Peter Graf, father of Steffi Graf, is on trial charged with evading 19 million marks (£7.3m) of tax on his daughter's earnings between 1989 and 1993.

Kotite in Jets' ejector seat

American football

Rich Kotite announced yesterday that he will step down as the head coach of the New York Jets after the team's 1996 season comes to an end against Miami tomorrow.

"I was not fired, I am not quitting, but I thought this was the best thing to do for the organisation," Kotite told a news conference in New York yesterday. "I wanted to do this today because I wanted the opportunity to talk to all of the players."

The news can hardly be described as unexpected given Kotite's 4-27 record during his two-year reign. The Jets, who have only a single win to their name in 1996, are already certain to have the worst record this season.

Kotite joined the Jets having been sacked by the Philadelphia Eagles, replacing Pete Carroll. He is unlikely to be the only coaching casualty when the season ends, with Carroll, now the San Francisco 49ers defensive co-ordinator, a favourite to land one of the vacancies – though it is unlikely to be the Jets job.

Basketball

NBA: Toronto 96 Milwaukee 93; Chicago 93 Charlotte 72; Utah 94 Miami 87 *(ot)*; San Antonio 115 Houston 101; Dallas 105 Vancouver 98; Washington 102 LA Clippers 93; Sacramento 112 Minnesota 105.

Cricket

England took control of the second under-19 Test against Pakistan in Sheikhupura yesterday. David Nash hit an unbeaten 108 and then the strike bowlers Alex Tudor (3 for 19) and Ben Hollioake (2 for 42) savaged Pakistan's batting. By the close of play on the second of four days Pakistan were 95 for 6 in reply to England's total of 361.

Yorkshire have pulled out of a proposed floodlit Sunday League game at The Oval because of fears that it would be unpopular with their supporters. Surrey wanted to experiment with a late afternoon start on Thursday 12 June, but the Yorkshire chief executive, Chris Hassell, said yesterday that the club's committee felt it had *"a major responsibility* to their members, many of whom would have been unable to get to the match".

The Tasmanian opener Jamie Cox hit a career-best unbeaten 191 yesterday to give his side a 93-run lead over Pakistan on the second day of their four-day match at Bellerive Oval in Hobart. Tasmania were 392 for 6 at stumps after resuming on 73 for 1. The Test batsman Ricky Ponting gave a hesitant performance ahead of next week's third Test against the West Indies, making 35.

TOUR MATCH: (Wangaratta, second day of four): Victoria 354 (G Vimpani 133, D Berry 50; N McLean 5-48); West Indies 312 for 5 (B Lara 86, S Campbell 80).

TOUR MATCH: (Hobart, second day of four): Pakistan 299 (Shahid Afridi 80, Mushtaq Ahmed 65; S Young 7-64); Tasmania 392 for 6 (J Cox 191no).

SHEFFIELD SHIELD (Brisbane, second day of four): New South Wales 190 (S Waugh 55, A Bichel 6-56); Queensland 460 for 6 (S Law 144, J Maher 91, I Healy 82no, A Symonds 50). **(Perth, first day of four):** South Australia 231 for 8 (J Brayshaw 73, D Lehmann 52) v Western Australia.

Equestrianism

OLYMPIA SHOW JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIPS (Kensington, London): Champagne Taittinger Christmas Carol Stakes: 1 Virtual Village Gamnusch (J Whitaker, GB) clear, 29.21sec; 2 Burg's Samantha (B Romp, Neth) clear, 29.32; 3 Trudo Kellef (E Wauters, Bel) clear, 35.83. **Holly Pair Relay:** 1 Fields of Athenry (G Glazzard, GB) and U Design Ronwila (J Renwick, GB) 69.26; 2 Reggae (C-O Nagel, Ger) and Prokopp's Dumbo (T Fruhmann, Aut) 72.21; 3 Gordon Goodtime (W Funnell, GB) and Togg Interview (T Stockdale, GB) 80.74. **Speedline Telecom Young Show Jumper of the Year:** 1 Miss Party Piece (B Dunning) 3 faults, 54.47; 2 Imata (B Twomey) 4 faults, 36.61; 3 Dutch Secret (C Webley) 4 faults, 38.74.

Football

The Republic of Ireland plan to play Wales in a friendly at Cardiff Arms Park on 11 February. The match is being arranged to help Ireland's World Cup qualifying preparations.

England's Under-18 team will meet their Scottish counterparts at Bury's Gigg Lane ground on 14 January.

LOANS: Kevin Scott (defender) Tottenham Hotspur to Charlton Athletic; Mike Newell (forward) Birmingham City to West Ham Utd; Nigel Clough (midfielder) Manchester City to Nottingham Forest; Steve Brodie (forward) Sunderland to Scarborough; Andy Cook (defender) Swansea City to Portsmouth; Gary McKeown (defender) Dundee to Exeter City; Matthew Rush (midfielder) Norwich City to Northampton Town *(extension of loan)*.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Fixture changes: Wed 19 Feb: Arsenal v Manchester Utd *(from 4 Mar)*; **Sun 23 Feb:** Arsenal v Wimbledon *(from 22 Feb)*; **Mon 3 Mar:** *Coventry City v Wimbledon (from 5 Mar)*; **Sun 9 Mar:** Liverpool v Newcastle Utd *(from 8 Mar)*.

FA CUP THIRD ROUND Fixture changes: Sun 5 Jan: Notts County v Aston Villa (12.0); Charlton v Newcastle (1.30, live on *Sky Sports*); Everton v Swindon (3.0); Manchester Utd v Tottenham (4.10, live on BBC1) *(all from 4 Jan)*.

THURSDAY'S LATE RESULTS: French League: Bastia 3 (Drobnjak 19, Perez 25, Moreau 45) Bordeaux 1 (Tholot 40). **Pontins League Cup Group Three:** Stockport 1 Stoke 2. **Avon Insurance Combination First Division:** Arsenal 0 Wimbledon 2; Southampton 4 West Ham 0. **FA Youth Cup second round replay:** *Luton Town 3 Oxford Utd 2.* **Harp Lager National League of Ireland Premier Division:** Home Farm Everton 0 Shamrock Rovers 0.

Ice Hockey

NHL: Boston 3 Tampa Bay 0; Ottawa 5 Florida 2; Philadelphia 5 NY Islanders 0; Pittsburgh 4 St Louis 0.

Rallying

Britain's Richard Burns will drive for Mitsubishi again in the 1997 FIA World Rally Championship. He will team up with the world champion Tommi Makinen and will contest at least seven of 14 events in an expanded championship.

Rugby Union

Bedford have named the Western Samoa flanker Junior Paramore in their team to play Orrell in the Pilkington Cup today, even though he will not arrive back from New Zealand until nine o'clock this morning. The winger Martin Offiah is also included after recovering from a recurrence of his toe injury.

The Scotland captain Gregor Townsend will defy a calf injury to play in Northampton's Pilkington Cup tie at Preston Grasshoppers, but Saints are without scrum-half Matthew Dawson and centres Jonathan Bell and Matt Allen. Dom Malone and Rob MacNaughton deputise.

Leicester Tigers field a mixture of players from the first XV and the Extras for their Pilkington Cup tie with Fourth Division Newbury. The former England winger Rory Underwood is included, Greg Austin plays at full-back and Eric Miller returns as flanker.

The Second Division strugglers Moseley have paid their first ever transfer fee to sign the 20-year-old Bath back row forward James Cockle. The club has also signed the Canadian international lock, Kevin Whitley, 27, bringing their number of full-time professionals to 11.

Skiing

Rain and heavy fog forced organisers to call off a women's World Cup downhill race at Crans Montana, Switzerland, yesterday.

ALPINE WORLD CUP Men's downhill (Val Gardena, It; 3,138 m, vertical drop 780m): 1 L Alphand (Fr) 1min 53.10sec; 2 A Skardal (Nor) 1:53.25; 3 K Ghedina (It) 1:53.30; 4 P Vitalini (It) 1:53.34; 5 A Duvillard (Fr) 1:53.48; 6 F Cavegn (Swit) 1:53.76; 7 W Franz (Aut) 1:53.88; 8 F Strobl (Aut) 1:53.93; 9 H Knaus (Aut) 1:53.99; 10 W Perathoner (It) 1:54.00; 11 M Hermann (Swit) 1:54.17; 12 B Kernen (Swit) 1:54.25; 13 R Assinger (Aut) 1:54.30; 14 R Boyd (Can) 1:54.43; 15 P Runggaldier (It) 1:54.54. **Standings (after two races):** 1 Alphand 140pts; 2 F Strobl 132; 3 Franz 116; 4 Ghedina 105; 5 Skardal 95; 6 Vitalini 86; 7 P Ortlieb (Aut) 74; 8 Duvillard 61; 9 J Strobl (Aut) 58; 10 Perathoner 55; 11 Cavegn 50; 12 K Rasmussen (US) 44; 13 Kernen 42; 14 Knaus 36; 15 K Wert (Can) 31.

Tennis

An umpire walked off court after the former Wimbledon champion, Pat Cash, allegedly swore at him during a practice match in Melbourne on Thursday, the Tennis Australia media manager Rosanne Michie said yesterday. Several line judges joined the protest, but no action can be taken against Cash because the match was not played under the auspices of Tennis Australia.

Tom Gullikson has been re-appointed captain of the US Davis Cup team and will be begin his fourth year in charge when the States meet Brazil in their opening 1997 Davis Cup tie on 7-9 February.

ROLEX ORANGE BOWL CHAMPIONSHIPS (Florida): Boys Under-18 singles fourth round: A Martin (Sp) bt M Lee (GB) 7-6 (7-5) 6-4.

SNOW REPORT – in association with Thomas Cook Ski Direct

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Around the resorts

Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Lwr cm	Upp cm	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Arinsal	Some great skiing	100%	14.12	60	90	Clear/sunny
Soldeu	Great snow on upper runs	95%	14.12	15	140	Cold/sunny
AUSTRIA						
Mayrhofen	Good, hard packed	90%	3.12	5	70	Dry/sunny
Obergurgl	Great, packed snow base	100%	13.12	40	150	Cloud/snow
St Johann	Good, packed, grippy snow	80%	2.12	25	30	Cloud/mild
CANADA						
Jasper	Groomed/packed powder	95%	16.12	51	51	Snow shwrs
Whistler	Soft packed/groomed	95%	14.12	189	189	Snow shwrs
FRANCE						
Chamonix	Good conditions on offer	70%	20.12	20	280	Lt snow
Courchevel	Upper slopes in good cond	60%	20.12	100	160	Variable
Montgenèvre	Fresh and powdery	100%	19.12	120	220	Cloud/snow
ITALY						
Cervinia	Great at all levels	100%	19.12	200	330	Changeable
Cortina	Some artificial on lwr runs	100%	19.12	20	80	Changeable
Courmayeur	Great at all levels	100%	19.12	60	220	Unsettled
SWITZERLAND						
Verbier	Good at all levels	65%	19.12	65	230	Cloud/snow
Zermatt	Fresh and dry	100%	13.12	65	260	Lt snow
UNITED STATES						
Aspen	Powder/packed powder	95%	18.12	110	125	Clear
Jackson Hole	Powder/packed powder	99%	16.12	195	200	n/a

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Shilton's milestone
Glenn Moore on the keeper's 1,000 game caper, page 22

sport

Up for the Cup
David Llewellyn on the small clubs' big day, page 20

Pearce calls on a Clough for help at Forest

Making a point: Stuart Pearce takes his first training session as Nottingham Forest manager
Photograph: Allsport

Stuart Pearce yesterday took over as caretaker manager of Nottingham Forest in succession to Frank Clark, who resigned on Thursday. His first move was to re-sign his former England colleague Nigel Clough on loan from Manchester City with a view to a permanent £700,000 transfer.

Pearce held a team meeting yesterday morning after training, at which he spelt out what he feels is required to halt a run of 16 matches without a win since the opening League match of the season.

Pearce said: "I've talked to the players and told them what I feel is needed from professional sportsmen. How they react I'll only find out on match days and on the training pitch.

"It is very important I get the backing of the team. I think I'll have the backing of the fans and the board of directors, but the players are the ones who've got to turn the situation around.

"I think they are a little nervous of me at present. They're a bit tentative in terms of what to say to me and what the situation is with me at present. But I am sure we will establish some middle ground between us."

Pearce is under no illusions as to the uphill nature of the task ahead: "It's the biggest challenge of my career and when you are down the bottom of the table it has to be the toughest job. It would be nice to face the job with years of experience of what it entails, but that's not the case."

Pearce will review his position in mid-January, when he has had a chance to decide whether he can combine managing with playing – and he is keen not to jeopardise his England prospects.

The Leicester manager and former Forest favourite Martin O'Neill has ruled himself out of contention should Pearce not to take on the post permanently. He said: "Let me say that people will have to put up with me at Leicester City for the next 18 months of my contract. I said the day I signed my contract at Leicester that I would not be walking out on the club before my contract runs out."

Clough has gone back to the City Ground after being left out of City's line-up for the past month. He is not match-fit so is unlikely to come into contention to face Arsenal today.

Meanwhile, the consortium led by the local businessman Sandy Anderson, the recommended choice of the current board of directors, is set to take over at Forest in the new year. Anderson will now have a clear run in his battle to take charge after the rival consortium headed by Monte Carlo businessman Lawrie Lewis opted to pull out.

Australia's new national coach, Terry Venables, yesterday named a home-based squad for his first three matches in charge. The former England manager, who officially takes over when he arrives in Australia on 3 January, will use a four-nations series with games in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney from 18-26 January to assess locally-based players prior to the World Cup qualifiers.

The West Ham striker Iain Dowie is likely to be out of action for 12 weeks after breaking an ankle against Stockport on Wednesday night. Dowie was injured when he fell awkwardly in a challenge with Mike Flynn.

The Football Association yesterday confirmed that the Liverpool defender Neil Ruddock has been charged with bringing the game into disrepute over his attack on the Tottenham chairman, Alan Sugar, in a Sunday newspaper article. Ruddock is unlikely to receive any support from his club, who have already apologised to Sugar.

The Manchester United striker Andy Cole will make his comeback in Monday's reserve game against Derby at Bury. The £7m former Newcastle player has been out of action since breaking both shins during a reserve game at Liverpool on 5 October.

West Brom flotation, page 16

Anger as Boro pull out of game

Blackburn Rovers do not see why they should risk catching a cold just because Middlesbrough's squad has been hit by a virus.

Rovers' caretaker-manager, Tony Parkes, has called on the Premier League to punish Middlesbrough for pulling out of today's Premiership match at Ewood Park, saying they had 23 players ruled out by injury and a virus that has swept through the club.

With Boro sliding down the table and Rovers having moved out of the relegation zone, Parkes was keen to play a match that could ultimately have a bearing on the relegation issue. Parkes believes the League should award Blackburn the points when a disciplinary panel examines Middlesbrough's case, the first in the Premiership's five-season history, in the new year.

Middlesbrough's chief executive, Keith Lamb, confirmed that the club had taken the decision to call off the game without Premier League permission. He said: "There is no provision within the Premier League rules to postpone games."

FIRST TEST: Vice-captain survives early scare to compile his third Test century of the year and put home side on the defensive

England given fresh hope by Hussain

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Bulawayo
Zimbabwe 376;
England 306 for 4

It took the arrival of the Guti, a chill wind uncannily reminiscent of a May day at Derby, as well as the more timely intervention of an unbeaten century from Nasser Hussain, to convince England that their inexperienced opponents are not infallible when cool heads and straight bats are pitted against them. If more of the same sang-froid is applied until teatime today, England could well be in the unusual position of winning an overseas Test match, something they have not achieved since the Adelaide Test almost two years ago.

Fortunes can swiftly change when significant breaks begin to go your way. Hussain, whose third three-figure score for England took just over five hours, was let off first ball when short-leg spilt a sharp chance as he shaped to flick Strang to mid-wicket.

Momentarily shaken, it was a reprieve that brought the best from the Essex man, whose patient innings and unbroken stand of 126 with John Crawley, have resurrected England's prospects of a positive result – a situation not widely foreseen at the start of play when Ladbrokes' odds against an England win stood at 20-1.

A combative and emotional character, England's vice-captain was in no doubts as to what the milestone meant to him, and how it fitted in with England's plans for the remainder of this match.

"It's a huge moment in my life as any hundred for England is," he said after a cool, drizzly day's play had finished in sunshine. "The slowness of the pitch and the way they just sat in the game and spread their fields out, meant you were never going to smack a hundred. You've got to grind it and that's what I did today.

"We've now got to try and bat for at least two sessions and get a lead. Then let's see what they are like batting under a bit of pressure for once."

It is a compelling thought and on yesterday's evidence alone, Zimbabwe's cricket still appears to be some way from being fully formed, with much of finishing touches being operated in a charmingly DIY manner.

For instance, instead of the revolving sightscreens that double as advertising boards on many established Test grounds around the world, the screens here at the Queen's club have fixed adverts behind the bowlers arm which are then alternately revealed and covered up by a man drawing and opening a set of white curtains.

The bowling – when shorn of Paul Strang – is almost as quaint and lacks depth, being little better than an average county attack. True, the highly regarded Heath Streak is clearly short of fitness, and Eddo Brandes' outswing was badly missed, but on a sluggish pitch like this, only Strang's leg-spin looked capable of moving the game forward for Zimbabwe.

He is not quite ready to keep company with Warne or Mushtaq, but on a day when precious little pressure was exerted by his colleagues bowling at the other end, he ran them a close third, taking 3 for 83, with 35 overs of business-class leg-spin.

Nick Knight despite his 56 appeared completely flummoxed by his googly, and Alec Stewart, eventually sawn off by a poor umpiring decision, was never quite at ease with his bag of tricks.

With Graham Thorpe continuing his sketchy tour with a scrappy 13 before edging a perfectly pitched googly to slip, England found themselves at 180 for 4 but Hussain and Crawley then composed their telling reply.

As individuals, they are England's best players of spin, though for quite differing reasons. Hussain does not read the wrist-spun ball quite as early as Crawley, whose rotary skills, as tested by the striated turntable of Dr Ken West, an American eye specialist, have made him particularly fluent at reading a turning ball.

Hussain's strength lies not so much in vision, but in the ball-bearing flexibility of his wrists, whose ability to ride and compensate the vagaries in turn and bounce, make up for other shortcomings, such as an occasionally stiff front leg.

Having initially helped themselves to some particularly wayward seam bowling from Streak and Henry Olonga, both batsmen were later forced into playing watchful innings, as Alistair Campbell, Zimbabwe's captain, spread his fields and went on the defensive.

It was an obstacle not presented to the earlier batsman, who were fed a succession of "hit me" balls from the pace bowlers. Knight, in particular, was savage towards anything directed short and wide outside his off stump (of which there was plenty).

In a flurry of cuts and carves, he rapidly made his way to his half-century, before Olonga cleverly got a slower ball to swing late into the left-hander's pads. It was the faster bowlers' sole success on a day that England at last showed some class.

Four square: Nasser Hussain, the England vice-captain, dispatches a delivery from Henry Olonga to the boundary during his gritty century against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo yesterday
Photograph: Empics

Zimbabwe come apart at the seams

HENRY BLOFELD

Another world-class leg-spinner, Paul Strang, caused England uncomfortable problems on the third day, but Zimbabwe's support bowling was so bad that he did not collect his just reward.

In the last few years Shane Warne, Mushtaq Ahmed and Anil Kumble have all worked their magic against England and Strang yesterday showed that he is entitled to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any of them.

Sadly for Zimbabwe, England's batsmen knew that if they could survive against Strang they would be able to score more than enough runs at the other end. Heath Streak, the best of the other bowlers, did not seem fully fit and could get nothing out of this extremely slow pitch.

England scored 80 runs for the loss of one wicket in the morning session and were 128 for 1 at lunch. Zimbabwe badly needed a wicket early in the afternoon, but when play restarted their captain, Alistair Campbell, gave seamers Bryan Strang and Streak the first six overs off which 32 easy runs were scored.

He brought on Paul Strang for the seventh over and the folly of it all was cruelly underlined when, in his very first over, Alec Stewart was caught lbw sweeping. Campbell's thinking defied belief, for if a wicket had gone down to the leg-spinner immediately after lunch it would not be hard to imagine the worries in the England dressing-room.

When Graham Thorpe went to Strang soon after it looked as if he might go through the England side, but this did not allow for the skill and resolve of Nasser Hussain and John Crawley.

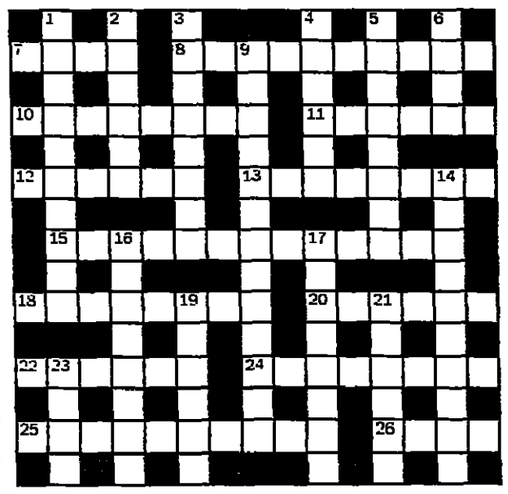
With an hour left and England on 261 for 4, Zimbabwe took the second new ball. The extra bounce might have helped Paul Strang but Campbell delayed giving him a bowl until a quarter of an hour remained. He had time for only three overs and, if he had come on earlier, he just might have played successfully on Hussain's or Crawley's nerves as they approached a hundred and a fifty respectively.

Strang's great misfortune of the day came before lunch when Hussain took the place of Nick Knight. Hussain pushed the spinner's first ball firmly through the hands of Stuart Carlisle at forward short-leg. It was a catch which would have been a great bonus if it had stuck, for it was not much more than a half-chance. But if it had been held who knows what might have happened?

The main lesson of the day for Zimbabwe was that it is no good having a top-class leg-spinner in your side if you do not give him his best chance of taking wickets. As this is only a two-match Test series there is little danger of over-bowling Strang.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3176. Saturday 21 December — By Phi



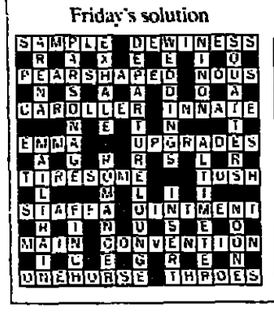
ACROSS

7 A manner recalled in song? (4)
8 Describing a successful swindler? (10)
10 Nymph in such a way occupying region (8)
11 Vehicle running finally? Yes, with proficiency (2-4)
12 Planes exist to provide debris washed ashore (6)
13 Religious picture in city church half of Holy Month (4, 4)
15 The language of effrontery is not really meant (6, 2, 5)
18 Course in unfinished list of courses supplied by book (8)
20 Sequence of punches in round ten brought back echoing cry of pain (3-3)
22 Get on well with Harrow's foremost Old Boy (an aristocrat) (6)
24 Drunken Phi, a roue, displaying elation (8)
25 The sound of common people to the fore in York? (10)
26 True article receiving Conservative backing (4)

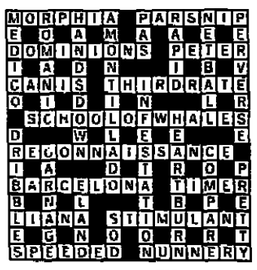
DOWN

1 Prudence waving inertly and lewdly (10)
2 One pulls away from unusually caustic desert plant (6)
3 Maquis active in one-third of Europe - one could give you a chilly reception! (8)
4 Dreadful nervous response upon receiving newspaper (6)
5 Free deer scoundrel cut (8)
6 This may do for non-teetotal punter! (4)
9 Lugged a piano? (6, 2, 2, 3)
14 Passenger to achieve importance (4-6)
16 Still the same height? Not any more (2, 6)
17 Casino employee suffering more from throat infection? (8)
19 Prohibition limiting cry of disapproval from uncouth fellow (6)
21 Stick in rising river is weathered (6)
23 Steal nothing when up in Scots town (4)

Friday's solution



Last Saturday's solution



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the new Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P. O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: Marcus Oliphant, Isleworth; A Thomas, Aston Cantlow; May Raffray, Bridge of Allan; W Marlaz, Woolhope; R Hart, West Harrow.

Bulawayo scoreboard

Third day: Zimbabwe won toss

ZIMBABWE – First Innings 376 (A Flower 112, A D R Campbell 84).

ENGLAND – First Innings
(Overnight: 48 for 1)
N V Knight lbw b Olonga ..... 56 *(105 min, 79 balls, 9 fours)*
†A J Stewart lbw b P Strang ..... 48 *(149 min, 123 balls, 8 fours)*
N Hussain not out ..... 101 *(312 min, 244 balls, 13 fours)*
G P Thorpe c Campbell b P Strang ..... 13 *(37 min, 23 balls, 3 fours)*
J P Crawley not out ..... 51 *(183 min, 153 balls, 7 fours)*
Extras (b4, lb2, w1, nb14) 21
Total (for 4, 439 mins, 108 overs) 306
Fall (cont): 2-92 (Knight), 3-160 (Stewart), 4-180 (Thorpe).

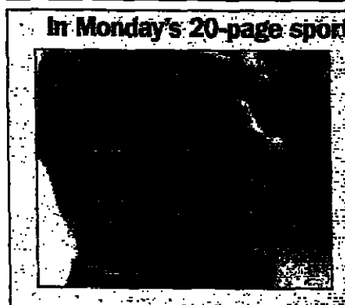
To bat: R D B Croft, D Gough, A D Mullally, C E W Silverwood, P C R Tufnell.

Bowling: Streak 23-6-52-0 (nb8) (6-2-11-0, 3-1-21-0, 6-2-8-0, 3-0-7-0, 5-1-5-0); B Strang 17-5-54-0 (nb2) (5-0-21-0, 5-0-22-0, 7-5-11-0); P Strang 37-10-83-3 (14-4-25-1, 20-6-46-2, 3-0-12-0); Olonga 17-1-72-1 (nb7, w1) (1-0-10-0, 6-1-22-1, 5-0-24-0, 5-0-16-0); Whittall 7-2-19-0; G Flower 7-3-20-0 (one spell each).

Progress: 50: 63 min, 15.5 overs. 100: 116 min, 27.5 overs. Lunch: 128-2 (Stewart 29, Hussain 12) 43 overs. 150: 196 min, 47.1 overs. 200: 261 min, 65.2 overs. Tea: 231-4 (Hussain 61, Crawley 19) 75 overs. 250: 323 min, 85 overs. New ball: Taken at 261-4 after 88 overs. 300: 405 min, 104.2 overs.

Umpires: R S Dunne and I D Robinson.

In Monday's 20-page sports section



'Sometimes when I think about the people who gave me a bashing I regret not bashing them back. But it's nice to know that I went through my career without hurting anybody'
JOHN CHARLES
talks to Ken Jones in the Monday Interview

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